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Virginity testing and hymenoplasty

The government has made it illegal to carry out, offer or aid and abet virginity testing or hymenoplasty in any part of the UK, as part of the Health and Care Act 2022.

It is also illegal for UK nationals and residents to do these things outside the UK.

These offences carry a maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.



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Virginity

Virginity is a concept that, in some cultures, denotes purity of a woman or girl. In some communities it is considered important for a woman to be a virgin before she is married. The concept of virginity can perpetuate harmful attitudes around a women’s sexuality. In some cases, the requirement for a girl to refrain from sexual intercourse before marriage can lead to pressure to undergo virginity testing and hymenoplasty.

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Safeguarding

Safeguarding procedures should be followed immediately where there are signs that women or girls are at risk and assessments of that risk should be made.

In an emergency, contact the police on 999.

Further information [here](#)

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Virginity testing

Under the Health and Care Act 2022, virginity testing is any examination of the female genitalia intended to establish if vaginal intercourse has taken place. This is irrespective of whether consent has been given. The position of the World Health Organization and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is that virginity tests have no scientific merit or clinical indication as there is no known examination that can prove whether a woman has had vaginal intercourse.

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Identifying those at risk

Women and girls from the age of 13 to 30 are most at risk but girls as young as 8 can be affected. Any woman or girl, of any age, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability or socioeconomic status could be subjected to a virginity test or hymenoplasty. Victims may take years to discuss their experiences due to the shame associated with these practices, the level of trauma that could be experienced and the fear of further so called ‘honour-based’ abuse.

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Violence against women and girls

Virginity testing and hymenoplasty are forms of violence against women and girls and are part of the cycle of so called ‘honour-based’ abuse. Women and girls are coerced, forced and shamed into undergoing these procedures, often pressurised by family members or their intended husband’s family in the name of supposedly upholding so-called honour and to fulfil the requirement that a woman remains ‘pure’ before marriage.

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Hymenoplasty

Hymenoplasty is a procedure undertaken to reconstruct the hymen to give the impression that a woman has no history of vaginal intercourse. There is no guarantee that this will fully reform the hymen or cause bleeding when penetration is attempted.

Hymenoplasty is not the same as other procedures that could be performed on the hymen for clinical reasons.