

## Medical-Forensic Terminology

Abrasion	An area of the body, skin, or mucus membranes denuded of skin which results from an abnormal or mechanical process. AKA a “scrape” or “scratch”
Anterior	Front part, in front
Anus	The terminal orifice of the alimentary canal and opening to the rectum (4 cm in length). It is surrounded by voluntary and involuntary sphincter muscles.
Avulsion	A tearing away of a structure (i.e. skin or mucous membranes)
Buccal Mucosa	Subcutaneous mucous membrane lining of the cheek.
Bite-mark injuries	A pattern injury common to the breast, thigh, abdomen and buttocks areas.
Bull’s eye injury	A patterned injury assuming the shape of the offending object; whether circular, oval or rectangle, there is a pale center with a hyper vascular or Petechial area.
Bumps	Solid elevation of tissue
Burn Injury	Any thermal injury to the skin caused by any heat source.
Cervix	Narrow lower or outer end of the uterus; neck of the uterus.
Cervical Os	Opening of the cervix.
Chlamydia Trachomatis	An organism that causes sexually transmitted infection i.e., nongonococcal urethritis and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
Clitoris	A small erectile organ located beneath the anterior labial commissure (the upper portions of the labia minora) and partially hidden by the anterior ends of the labia magora.
Contusion	A superficial injury produced from impact without laceration when blood forms under the surface or in the subcutaneous tissue causing discoloration of the surface. AKA “bruise”.
Cunnilingus	Sexual activity in which the mouth and tongue are used to stimulate the female genitalia.
Defense Injuries	Posturing of the victim for protection against an attack. Injuries can be found on any body part that can be used as a shield; the most common areas being the hands, fingers, or arms.

Distal	Farther from the body
Ecchymosis	A hemorrhagic spot or blotch, larger than petechiae, on the shin or mucous membrane, forming a non-elevated, rounded or irregular blue or purple patch. NOT caused by blunt force trauma. NOT a bruise or contusion.
Edema	Swelling of soft tissue
Ejaculation	Expulsion of semen
Erythema	A redness of the skin produced by the congestion of capillaries.
Fellatio	Oral stimulation of the penis
Fissure	A general term for cleft or groove.
Fossa Navicularis	Concave area immediately below the hymen, junction of the two labia minora.
Genital Warts	Also called venereal warts or condylomata acuminata; caused by human papilloma virus (HPV)
Gonorrhoea	Infection caused by gram-negative diplococci Neisseria Gonorrhoea of the urethra, cervix, rectum, pharynx or eyes; may evolve into bacteremia.
Hematoma	Tumor-like mass of blood coagulated under the skin or in a cavity.
Hymen	A membranous collar or semi-collar that surrounds the vaginal introitus and separates the external genitalia from the vagina; all females have this structure and there is wide anatomic variation in morphology.
Introitus (vaginal orifice)	The entrance to the vagina is in the posterior portion of the vestibule, between the labia minora. The shape and size of the opening is variable. Remnants of the hymen may be visible as small tags around the vaginal orifice.
Labia Majora	Rounded fat pads of skin forming the lateral boundaries of the vulva extending from the mons posteriorly to the perineum. In adult women, the outer portion of the labia is usually covered with hair, while the inner portion is smooth, free of hair. (outer lips to vagina). A single lip is called a labium majus.
Labia Minora	Between the labia majora are rounded fat pads of skin forming the labia minora. Posteriorly, the labia minora become smaller and blend into the labia majora. One side may be smaller than the

other with normal hyperpigmentation of edges. Inner lips to the vagina. A single lip is called labium minus.

Laceration/Transection	Tear of the tissue
Lateral	Toward or on the side
Meatus (urethral orifice)	The opening of the urethra
Mons Pubis	The prominence caused by the pad of fatty tissue over the symphysis pubis in the female.
Patterned Injuries	Specific characteristics of an injury that reflect the identity of the wounding object or provides information about the nature of the weapon.
Penis	The male genital organ consisting of a root, body and a glans. The root is attached to the pubic bones. The body consists of two parallel cylinders of erectile tissue, the corpora cavernosa, and beneath them, a third cylindrical structure, the corpus spongiosum, through which the urethra passes. The glans is a thickening at the tip of the penis and is covered by a prepuce (foreskin) and is demarcated from the body of the penis by a ridge, the corona. The penis is homologous with the clitoris.
Peri-Anal Folds	Redundant perianal skin radiating from the anus.
Peri-Anal Skin Tags	Extra skin that interrupts the symmetry of the perianal folds and does not smooth out with traction.
Peri-Hymenal Tissues	Tissues lateral to the hymen from the base of the hymen to labia minora.
Perineum	For females part of genitalia located between the vulva and anus, for males, between the scrotum and anus.
Petechiae	Small singular or multiple hemorrhages about the size of a pin head.
Posterior	Toward or on the back
Posterior Fourchette	A tense band or fold of mucous membrane at the posterior commissure of the vagina, connecting the posterior ends of the labia minora; the area below the fossa navicularis, point of fusion with the posterior labia.
Prepuce	A fold capping the clitoris in females. Also known as the clitoral hood. In males the foreskin of the penis.
Posterior Fornix	Cavity within the vagina located inferior to the cervix.

Prostate	A gland which surrounds the neck of the bladder and the urethra. It is made up partly of glandular elements, the ducts from which empty into the prostatic portion of the urethra, and produces the majority of the seminal fluid.
Proximal	Toward or near the center of or close to the body
Scratch	Linear abrasions or wounds caused by scraping
Scrotum	A skin pouch that contains the testes.
Suction injury	Created by the mouth when forming a negative vacuum pressure over the tissue. AKA “hickey”.
Syphilis	Sexually transmitted disease caused by the spirochete <i>treponema pallidum</i> ; characterized by sequential stages and years of latency; may affect any tissue.
Tenderness	Any area of the body which is sensitive to pain upon pressure
Testes	Male sex organs that produce spermatozoa.
Trichomoniasis	A single cell protozoan; sexually transmitted and causes burning and itching to vulva with yellow-green discharge. Most males are asymptomatic carriers.
Urethral Meatus	The opening of the urethra into the glans in the male.
Vagina	A tubular structure that extends from the vestibule to the uterus. It lies in the midline and its axis usually points toward the midline of the sacrum. The vaginal wall itself is composed of mucous membrane-like muscle fibers and connective tissue. The vaginal tube is very pliable and distendable.
Ventral	Towards or on the front
Vulva (Pudendum)	External sexual organs including mons pubis, clitoris, labia majora, labia minora, vaginal vestibule, urethra orifice, vaginal orifice, hymen, fossa navicularis and posterior fourchette (or commissure).

References:

- Girargin et al. Color Atlas of Sexual Assault. C V Mosby: 1997.
- Olshaker et al. Forensic Emergency Medicine. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: 2001
- Crowley, Sharon R. Sexual Assault: The Medical-Legal Examination. McGraw-Hill/Appleton & Lange: 1999.