

## **External Genitalia - Female**

The external genitalia of women consist of the labia, clitoris, and vestibular glands.

### **Labia**

The labia majora consist of folds of skin covering an abundance of adipose tissue. In the adult, the outer surface is covered by coarse hair with many sweat and sebaceous glands. The inner surface is smooth and hairless and also contains sweat and sebaceous glands. The labia majora are the homologue of the scrotum in the male. The labia minora consist of a core of highly vascular, loose connective tissue covered by stratified squamous epithelium that is deeply indented by connective tissue papillae. The deeper layers of epithelium are pigmented. Both surfaces of the labia minora are devoid of hair, but large sebaceous glands are present.

### **Clitoris**

The clitoris is an erectile body that corresponds to the dorsal penis. It consists of two corpora cavernosa enclosed in a layer of fibrous connective tissue and separated by an incomplete septum. The free end of the clitoris terminates in a small, rounded tubercle, the glans clitoridis, which consists of spongy erectile tissue. A thin layer of nonkeratinized stratified squamous epithelium covers the clitoris with high papillae associated with many specialized nerve endings. The clitoris has no corpus spongiosum and therefore does not contain the urethra.

### **Vestibular Glands**

The vestibule is the cleft between the labia minora and in it are the vaginal and urethral openings. It is lined by stratified squamous epithelium and contains numerous small vestibular glands concentrated about the openings of the vagina and urethra. The glands contain mucous cells and resemble the urethral glands of the male. A pair of larger glands, the greater or major vestibular glands, is present in the lateral walls of the vestibule. They are compound tubuloalveolar glands that secrete a clear, mucoid lubricating fluid. The major glands correspond to the bulbourethral glands of the male.

