

I HAD A SECRET.

SEX WAS SUPPOSED TO FEEL GOOD,  
BUT IT HURT.

THE PAIN KEPT GETTING WORSE AND  
I FELT SO FRUSTRATED, SAD, AND  
HELPLESS.

I THOUGHT, WHAT'S WRONG WITH  
ME?



#ITSNOTINYOURHEAD



KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING  
ARE THE FIRST STEPS IN A WOMAN'S  
JOURNEY TO RECOVERY.



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“AS SOON AS MY PARTNER  
LOOKS AT ME WITH AN  
INVITING GAZE, I KNOW  
HE/SHE WANTS SEX AND I  
CAN FEEL THE PAIN IN MY  
VULVA ALREADY.”

An illustration of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a red top and dark pants, standing in a medical setting. In the background, there is a blue door with a white cross, a clipboard with a heart and an arrow, and a white wall. The scene is set against a light blue and white background with diagonal lines.

## WHAT IS PVD

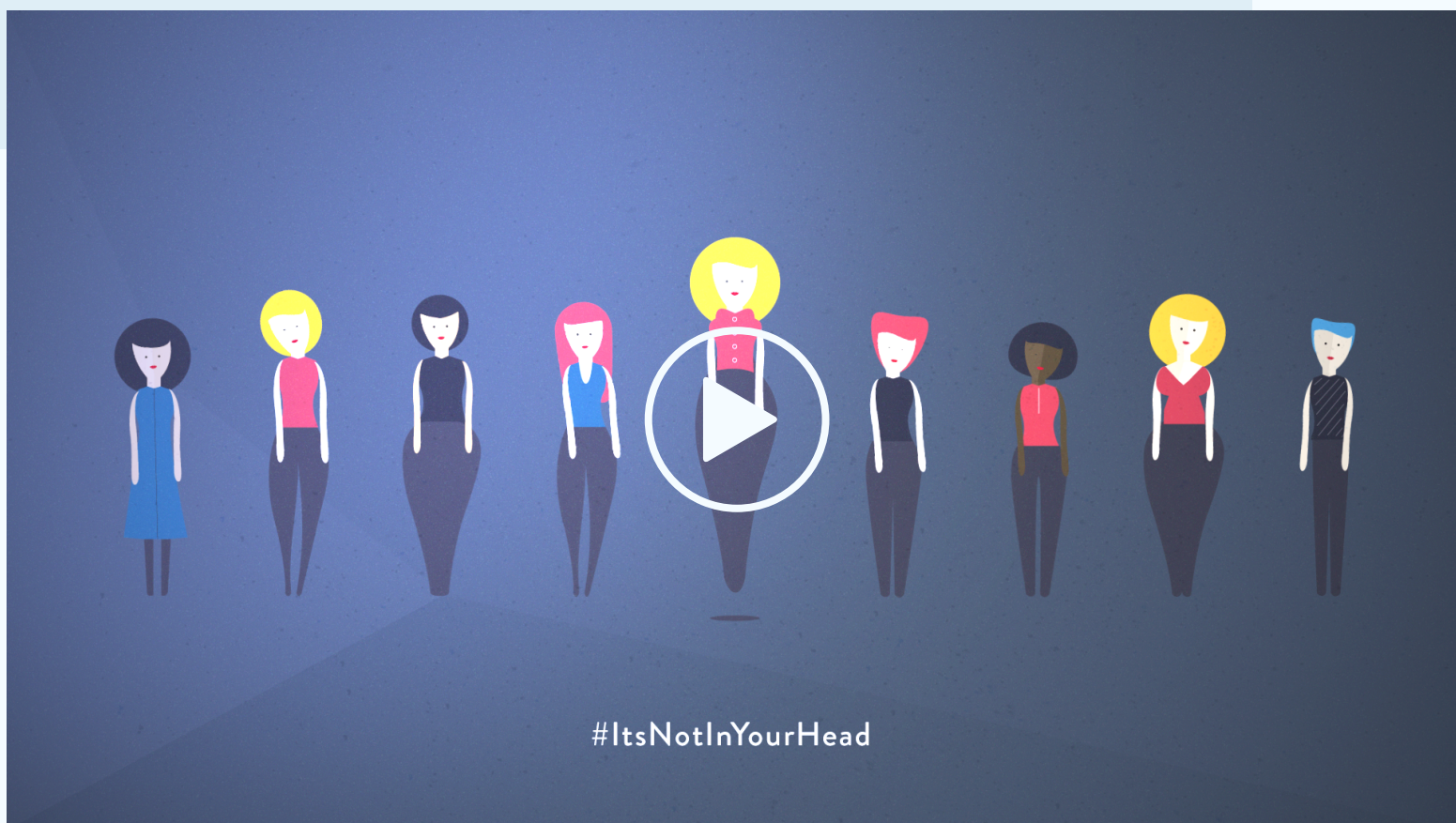
Provoked vestibulodynia, or PVD, is pain experienced when contact is made with the area near the entrance to the vagina, known as the vulvar vestibule.

This pain often occurs during sexual activity, but it can also be triggered by clothing, inserting tampons, pap tests, sitting, or any other touching sensations.

PVD affects **up to 10% of women**, many of whom are unable to receive an accurate diagnosis since symptoms of PVD do not appear physically. This can lead to frustration, hopelessness, and feelings of isolation as they are led to believe that their pain is "*all in their head*".

A study at the University of British Columbia compared Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and mindfulness meditation for groups of women with PVD. Researchers found that both are effective treatments. Both work to reduce pain, increase sexual satisfaction, and improve quality of life.

This campaign aims to raise awareness about PVD and share evidenced-based research of psychological treatments that can help manage female genital pain.



*Source: Women's Health Research Institute*

MY DOCTOR TOLD ME TO HAVE A  
GLASS OF WINE BEFORE SEX AND  
THAT I MUST BE ANXIOUS . I  
TRIED THAT BUT IT DIDN'T HELP.

I TOLD MY DOCTOR TO LOOK  
HARDER DURING THE EXAM. THERE  
MUST BE SOME KIND OF TEAR OR  
CUT THAT EXPLAINS THE PAIN.

MY DOCTOR TREATED ME FOR YEAST  
INFECTIONS FOR A YEAR BEFORE  
WE REALIZED THAT YEAST WAS NOT  
THE CAUSE OF MY PAIN.

An illustration of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a red top and dark pants, standing in a hospital hallway. In the background, there is a blue door with a white cross, a clipboard with a heart and an arrow, and a white door. The scene is set against a light blue and white background with diagonal lines.

## HOW TO HELP

- Share the Women's Health Research Institute's [article](#)
- Share our [video](#)
- Tweet using our hashtag: #ItsNotInYourHead
- Follow us on [Twitter](#)
- Like our page on [Facebook](#)



# SPREAD THE WORD



I couldn't keep my pain to myself anymore, so I shared my secret. 1 in 5 women have provoked vestibulodynia. #ItsNotInYourHead



Provoked vestibulodynia is a chronic vulvar pain. It can affect sex, menstruation, pelvic exams, & even sitting. #ItsNotInYourHead



I have a secret. Sex is supposed to feel good, but it hurts. Let's stop the silence together.  
#ItsNotInYourHead



1 in 5 women experience pain using tampons. If it hurts #ItsNotInYourHead. Ask a health professional about provoked vestibulodynia.



1 in 5 women experience pain during sex. When sex hurts #ItsNotInYourHead. Ask a health professional about provoked vestibulodynia.



Many women with provoked vestibulodynia (PVD) suffer in silence for a long time before receiving an accurate diagnosis since physical signs of PVD aren't visible in an exam.

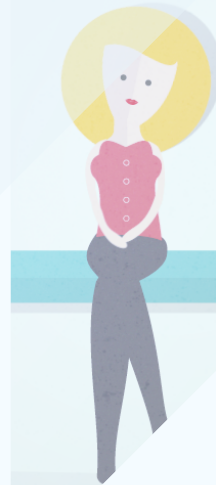
If you're in pain ask a health professional about provoked vestibulodynia.  
#ItsNotInYourHead



Learning how the mind and body work together is key to managing and reducing pain. If you're living with provoked vestibulodynia #mindfulness therapy may help. #ItsNotInYourHead

\* Click the Twitter icon to generate tweet

“FOR THE LONGEST TIME I  
ASSUMED THAT EVERYONE  
EXPERIENCED PAIN DURING  
SEXUAL ACTIVITY. IT WAS ONLY  
AFTER I TALKED TO A FRIEND  
ABOUT IT THAT I REALIZED THIS  
WAS NOT NORMAL.”



## HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [National Vulvodynia Association](#)
- [International Society for Sexual Medicine](#)
- [Guide to practicing Mindfulness](#)
- [Vulval Pain Society](#)
- [International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease](#)
- [BC Centre for Vulvar Health](#)

I ASSUMED THAT MY GENITAL PAIN  
WAS BECAUSE I WAS SEXUALLY  
ABUSED AS A CHILD.

I ASSUMED THAT MY  
GENITAL PAIN WAS RELATED  
TO ME BEING GAY.

“ I HAD NO IDEA THAT  
SO MANY OTHER  
WOMEN EXPERIENCED  
EXACTLY WHAT I DO. ”



## YOU CAN HELP BREAK THE SILENCE.

Download our sharable graphics for your own social media, or click-to-tweet one of our pre-written statements about PVD.

#ItsNotInYourHead

  @NotInYourHead17

