

## Use of wooden tongue depressors in the examination of vulva



Nicolas Kluger, MD, PhD  
Helsinki, Finland

### CLINICAL CHALLENGE

For a dermatologist, examination of the appearance of the female external genitalia is key for diagnosing many diseases that women of all ages encounter.<sup>1</sup> Mauskar et al<sup>2</sup> recently published a CME article with useful tips and information about how to conduct a patient's interview and examination techniques of the vulva. The examination of the vulva starts with simple observation followed by gloved-fingers examination of the labia majora, labia minora, the vestibule, and the clitoris. Vulvar examination may be difficult because of a patient's anxiety or fear of pain.

### SOLUTION

Two wooden tongue depressors allow examining thoroughly the labia, clitoral hood, vulvar mucosa, and vestibula without the need to directly touch the mucosa with gloves (Fig 1). One can perform a gentle examination in case of a painful vulvar condition as well to assess local anatomic changes in case of lichen sclerosus. It is easy, comfortable, and possibly less stressful for a patient who is apprehensive about this examination.



**Fig 1.** Examination of the vulvar structures with 2 wooden tongue depressors in a patient with lichen sclerosus.

The author wishes to thank Riikka Ahava, MD, and Tuomas Mäkilä, MD, for fruitful discussion in regard to this Clinical Pearl.

### REFERENCES

1. Cohen Sacher B. The normal vulva, vulvar examination, and evaluation tools. *Clin Obstet Gynecol.* 2015;58(3):442-452.
2. Mauskar MM, Marathe K, Venkatesan A, Schlosser BJ, Edwards L. Vulvar diseases, part I: approach to the patient. *J Am Acad Dermatol.* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2019.07.115>.

From the Department of Dermatology, Venereology, and Allergology, Helsinki Hospital.

Funding sources: None.

Conflicts of interest: None disclosed.

Reprints not available from the authors.

Correspondence to: Nicolas Kluger, MD, PhD, Department of Dermatology, Skin and Allergies Hospital, Meilahdentie 2, PO Box 160, 00029 HUS, Finland. E-mail: [nicolas.kluger@hus.fi](mailto:nicolas.kluger@hus.fi).

*J Am Acad Dermatol* 2020;83:e325.

0190-9622/\$36.00

© 2019 by the American Academy of Dermatology, Inc.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2019.12.048>