



Cliterate

Cut-out Activity: History of the Clitoris Timeline

Instructions:

Print these pages single-sided and cut along the dotted lines to create individual strips, each containing a historical timepoint. Mix them up and distribute them among the group. Participants must work together to arrange themselves in chronological order, forming a timeline from the earliest to the latest progress. Once in order, each person should read their timepoint aloud to the group.



460 B.C.:

Hippocrates referred to the clitoris as "columella" or "little pillar."



40 A.D.:

Galen theorised that female anatomy is an inverted version of male anatomy, ignoring the existence of the clitoris as a distinct anatomical structure.



110 A.D.:

Rufus of Ephesus identified the clitoris and noted its link to female pleasure.



1487:

The clitoris was labelled the "devil's teat" in a witch-hunting manual, tying it to superstition.

1543:

Anatomist Andreas Vesalius denied the significance of the clitoris, considering it as a rare anomaly not found in healthy women.



1545:

Charles Estienne described the clitoris as a "shameful member" in one of the earliest dissections.



1559:

Realdo Colombo claimed to have "discovered" the clitoris, calling it "the seat of female delight".



1672:

Reginer De Graff published early illustrations of the clitoris.



1800s:

Women diagnosed with "hysteria" were subjected to clitoridectomies (removal of the clitoral glans).




1844:

Geog Ludwig Kobelt published an accurate description of the function of the clitoris, as well as accurate illustrations.



1948:

The clitoris, which had previously been minimally mentioned, disappeared from medical textbook Gray's Anatomy, only to conservatively reappear decades later during the 1960s.



1960s-70s:

Feminists studied their own bodies, challenged anatomy texts, and emphasized the clitoris in works like *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.



1963:

A worm-like, unlabelled part of the body assumed to be the clitoris reappears in the 27th edition of Gray's Anatomy, incorrectly depicted.




1994:

Professor Helen O'Connell became Australia's first female urologist and discovered a lack of accurate information about the clitoris, raising concerns about the implications for pelvic surgery.


1998:

Melbourne-based urologist, Dr. Helen O'Connell mapped the entire clitoris and its nerve endings, via cadaveric dissections.




2005:

Dr. Helen O'Connell used Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans to map blood flow in the clitoris, revealing further detailed evidence of the structure.




2008:

The first fully labelled clitoris since 1947 appears in the 40th Edition of Gray's Anatomy.



2009:

The first 3D ultrasound of the engorged clitoris was conducted.



2022:

The International Cliteratti was formed. This global group includes leading medical professionals, academics and vulva and clitoris model makers who have a shared aim of translating medical knowledge into accessible formats for all people.

2022:

Research showed the suspensory ligament keeps the clitoris bent, challenging the idea of clitoral "erection".

2023:

The Cliterate model was launched.

2023:

The number of clitoral nerves was found to be 10,280, not 8,000 as previously believed.

2025:

A January, 2025 PubMed search yields 2,780 published studies on the clitoris, versus 56,443 on the penis. Despite progress, the clitoris is still omitted or largely underrepresented in medical and anatomical texts.