



Terminology Committee

Update of the Terminology Committee: Consensus (ISSVD, ISSWSH and IPPS) definitions of the descriptors of vulvodynia / Jacob Bornstein MD, MPA

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Background: The ISSVD, together with the International Society for the Study of Women Sexual Health (ISSWSH) and the International Pelvic Pain Society (IPPS) prepared the “2015 ISSVD, ISSWSH, and IPPS Consensus Terminology and Classification of Persistent Vulvar Pain and Vulvodynia”¹ (2015 Consensus terminology). It has been approved by all three societies and co-published in three leading Journals: Journal of Lower Genital Tract Disease¹, Obstetrics and Gynecology², and The Journal of Sexual Medicine³.

The new terminology task assigned: A few months after the publication of the 2015 Consensus terminology, the ISSVD received a request from one of the members, to provide definitions of the descriptors of vulvodynia. These 11 descriptors are arranged in 4 sets descriptors in table 3 of the 2015 consensus terminology¹⁻³.

Resolution of the issue: This matter has been discussed with the members of the writing group of the 2015 consensus terminology paper, the 2015-2017 ISSVD Executive council and the ISSVD Terminology Committee, resulting in a set of proposed optional definitions.

At the 24th World Congress of the ISSVD in Mendoza, all proposed definitions were discussed by the terminology committee members in two committee meetings, and then discussed at the ISSVD Business meeting, which voted on a set of definitions. Although accepted by a majority vote, this set of definitions was sent after the congress to the ISSVD membership and to the IPPS and ISSWSH and comments were collected and discussed. This set of definitions was then approved by the ISSWSH and IPPS, and by the new, 2017-2019 ISSVD terminology committee and the ISSVD Executive Council.

The final consensus definitions of vulvodynia descriptors are (Table 1):

Table 1: Definitions of vulvodynia descriptors

An addendum to the 2015 ISSVD, ISSWSH, and IPPS Consensus Terminology and Classification of Persistent Vulvar Pain and Vulvodynia¹⁻³

Descriptor	Definition
Location	
Localized	Involvement of a portion of the vulva, such as the vestibule (Vestibulodynia), clitoris (Clitorodynia), etc.
Generalized	Involvement of the whole vulva



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Provocation	
Provoked	The discomfort is provoked by physical contact. Such contact may be sexual, non-sexual or both. i.e. vaginal penetration, clothing, pressure tampon insertion, cotton-tipped applicator pressure, fingertip pressure, etc.
Spontaneous	The symptoms occur without any provoking physical contact
Onset	
Primary	Onset of the symptoms occurs with first provoking physical contact (i.e. tampon placement, intercourse, vaginal penetration)
Secondary	Onset of the symptoms did not occur with first provoking physical contact
Temporal pattern	
Persistent	The condition persists over a period of at least 3 months (Symptoms can be constant or intermittent). Synonym – Chronic (condition)
Constant	The symptoms are always present
Intermittent	The symptoms are not always present
Immediate	The symptoms occur during the provoking physical contact
Delayed	The symptoms occur after the provoking physical contact

The ISSVD recommends that these definitions of vulvodynia descriptors as well as the 2015 Consensus terminology, be used for diagnosis and description of vulvar pain and vulvodynia.

References:

1. Bornstein J, Goldstein AT, Stockdale CK, Bergeron S, Pukall C, Zolnoun D, Coady D. 2015 ISSVD, ISSWSH, and IPPS Consensus Terminology and Classification of Persistent Vulvar Pain and Vulvodynia J Lower Gen Tract Dis 2016;20:126-30
2. Co published in: Obstet & Gynecol 2016; 127:745-51.
3. Co-published in: Journal of Sexual Medicine 2016; 13:607-12