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## What is a full body cavity search?

With the controversy about Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade being arrested and made to undergo both strip and body cavity searches on charges of visa fraud in New York raging on, many were left wondering what a body cavity search is. Here is a breakdown of what it means:



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by Taboola

A full body cavity search is a visual search or manual internal inspection of body cavities for prohibited material such as illegal drugs, money, jewellery, or weapons. This search is different from a strip search as it involves poking fingers or inserting the entire hand into suspect's rectums.

**There are two types of BCS – visual and manual.**

**Visual body cavity search** involves checking of body cavities like nostrils, ears, mouth, penis, vagina and rectum with the help of a flashlight. The person undergoing this search needs to regulate the body parts for a proper examination.

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**Manual search** involves body cavities being examined using a finger or the entire hand. However, this type of search is restricted to individuals who either refuse to cooperate with the authorities or when there is a proof of the suspect carrying any of the barred substances.

**Guidelines to conduct the search:**

**According to a Hindu report**, the US Marshals Service's (USMS) protocol documents, called the Prisoner Operations Service Directives, have a separate section dedicated to body searches.

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As per the body search guidelines in the document, the USMS is authorised to carry out four types of searches – pat-down search, in-custody search, strip-search and digital cavity search.

The guidelines also state that while conducting a strip search that Marshals need to ensure that it is done in a private location where only designated personnel are allowed examine the detainee.

The rules further state that that the search be conducted by a member of the same sex unless it is a physician or nurse, and all efforts be made to protect the modesty of the person.

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During the search, the designated officer can instruct the prisoner/detainee to take off all the loose things and conduct a thorough visual examination of the prisoner's body from head to toe.

In the next stage of inspection, the officer can check behind each ear and look inside the prisoner's ear canals, nostrils, and mouth, (under the tongue also), roof of the mouth, and between the lips and gums.

They are also authorised to visually inspect the front part of the body, paying close attention to areas such as armpits, breasts, and genital area.

The protocol also authorises the officer to direct the prisoner to "spread her legs and bend forward at the waist [to] observe the anus area and genitals from the rear."

Lastly, the protocol advises conclusion of the examination with an observation of the bottoms and between the toes of both feet.

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