

making sex feel good

How is sex supposed to feel? Good? Exciting? Fun? Romantic?

Ideally sex is a positive experience for you and your partner(s). That doesn't mean it's always easy. It's common for sex to feel frustrating, confusing, or even painful. But sex doesn't have to be that way! This factsheet is designed to help you figure out how to make sex feel good for you.

Finding out what feels good

Sexual pleasure is different for everyone – we all have our own sensitive spots, fantasies and turn-ons. Each sex partner will have their own too. And not everyone is into sex, or all kinds of sex. Understanding your own sexual needs, boundaries, preferences and desires, and communicating about them can help sex feel good. It's normal to have a range of curiosities and interests. Here are some tips to help you better understand what feels good for you sexually:

Identifying where and how you like to be touched. Try touching yourself on different parts of your body, changing speeds or levels of pressure to get a sense of what you might like. Knowing what you enjoy can help you communicate to others where to go and where to avoid so that you start maximizing your pleasure.

Masturbation. Masturbation is making yourself feel good by using your hands or toys on yourself (alone or partnered). Typically when people talk about masturbating, they mean touching genitals. However, bodies are full of all kinds of sensitive spots, so feel free to explore multiple areas and sensations.

A note about genitals*:

- For people with clitorises, the external tip is often the most sensitive part of the body. This is a small bump at the top of the vulva. The rest of the clitoris is inside the body, wrapped around the vagina.
- For people with penises, the most sensitive part of the body is often the penis head or glans, located at the tip of the shaft.

Body positivity. Many of us are taught to be ashamed or embarrassed about our bodies. But despite what we've been told, there is more than one kind of sexy body. Everyone's body is unique (all parts of our bodies vary in size, shape, colour, and smell), which means that there are a bunch of ways that your body is sexy.

Educating yourself. A lot of people don't know much about sex. Not everybody receives comprehensive sexual health education in schools or at home. People end up learning a lot of things from the media, porn, and from the internet. Because most mainstream media and porn features only certain kinds of bodies (white, thin, muscular, large penises/butts/boobs) and certain kinds of sex

**We know that these aren't the words everyone uses for their bodies (eg. trans folks) and support you using the language that feels best for you.*

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(heterosexual, focused on male pleasure) it shows an inaccurate depiction of how most people actually have sex. Doing your own research and talking to friends can help connect you with sex-positive, body-positive, trans-positive, pleasure focused resource materials that can expand what sex can mean to you.

Tips for making sex more pleasurable

What is sex? Often we're encouraged to think of sex as penetrative, partner sex. But sex isn't just about genitals – having sex is about your whole body, including your mind. It includes fantasizing, masturbating (solo or partnered), oral sex, vaginal or anal sex (intercourse) with dildos, penises, fingers or toys. Expanding your definition of sex can help expand your options for pleasure.

Relaxing. Sex can be a great way to relieve tension, but sometimes you can feel too tense for sex. If you are nervous, feel guilty or worried, you may have trouble getting/keeping an erection, your vagina may not lubricate (get slippery) and you may have trouble feeling pleasure. Try to engage in sexual activity with people, in places, and at times that make you feel comfortable.

Practicing safer sex. It can be hard to relax and enjoy sex if you're constantly worried about the risks of getting pregnant or getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Here are some things you can do to help ease these worries:

- Talk to your partner(s) about safer sex. Talk about STI testing history, what activities/risk you're comfortable with, or what types of protection or precautions you could use.
- Visit a sexual health clinic to talk about STI testing and/or birth control options for you/your partner(s), if applicable.
- Consider using protection: condoms, dental dams and/or latex gloves help lower your risk of STIs and/or pregnancy.

Communication. The best way for your partner(s) to know if you're enjoying something is to tell them. It's also good to tell them when you're not enjoying something as much. Talk about what feels good for you and encourage your partner(s) to do the same.

- And keep talking. Talk about what feels good for you before you have sex. Talk about what feels good for you during sex. Talk about what felt good for you after you had sex. Communication is key.
- Keep a sense of humour. Sex often feels like a heavy topic, but that doesn't mean that you can't laugh and have fun with it. Sometimes a bit of humour helps to break the ice and makes everyone more comfortable.

Foreplay. Spend some time getting in the mood. This can include kissing, giving/receiving massages, talking dirty, lighting candles - whatever makes you feel sexy.

Exploring each other. It can be exciting to work together to figure out where you like to be touched. Everyone reacts to pleasure differently—with their own sounds, words, movements, facial expressions. Seeing a partner's reactions to new types of pleasure can be fun and intimate for everyone involved.

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Listening to your body. There could be lots of reasons for experiences pain or discomfort during sex. If something hurts or doesn't feel good, it can help to take a break and try something new. Doing things faster or slower, switching positions, using more lube – there are lots of options, and there's no rush. Take the time you need to figure it out. If nothing seems to be helping things feel better, checking in with a clinician can help figure out if something medical is going on, or provide you with other resources.

Deciding what you want. Try imagining the kind of sex you WANT to have, not the kind you think you should have. Thinking about what sexual activities you're comfortable with can help you figure out your limits. Are some sex acts off the table for you? Consider telling your partner(s) ahead of time. Remember, the choice is yours. You can also ask if your partner has some things that are off limits.

Taking care of yourself. Depending on how you're feeling about your mental health or your experience with trauma, sexual activity (solo or partnered) can be triggering. It's okay if you need support or want to talk to someone about it. Counselling is available and can help a lot.

Remember:

- It's never too late to start exploring your body and sexual pleasure.
- There are lots of reasons why someone might not feel ready to have sex. This can be influenced by how you were raised, spirituality, comfort with your body, where you want to have sex, who might know about it, etc. These are all valid reasons.
- If something doesn't feel good, listen to your gut – it's your right to say no. And listen to your partner(s) if they say no. Consent is a key part of happy and healthy sex.

For more info on sex and sexual pleasure visit:

- Good For Her: www.goodforher.com (woman/queer positive sex store)
- Come As You Are: www.comeasyouare.com (woman/queer positive online sex store)

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