

“Who knew?” secrets to gratifying sex

The key to greater satisfaction may simply be reading up on the latest science. Doesn't sound so fun? Not to worry, we did it for you!

In theory at least, sex is pretty straightforward: Insert tab A into slot B. Repeat and enjoy. But in life, getting the mechanics right is only a small (albeit important) part of the picture. Fortunately, researchers are learning more about the fine art of fornication every day, and, happily, their findings can translate into a more fulfilling sex life for you. Get ready to put these steamy scientific facts to the bed-test tonight.

WHO KNEW?

Sex can help you lose weight.

It may be a little easier to have an orgasm when you're comfortable in your skin, but the reverse may be equally true: Having (satisfying) sex can help you get the body you want. “Orgasms activate the production of phenethylamine, a natural amphetamine that suppresses appetite,” says Ian Kerner, Ph.D., author of *She Comes First* (HarperCollins). Plus, the act itself can burn up to 200 calories, Kerner says. Combine that with the fact that people with an active sex life tend to be more active in general, and you might find that dropping a size could be easier than you ever imagined.

WHO KNEW?

You can climax in your sleep.

The following finding ought to put the kibosh on any lingering debate over the whole sex-starts-in-your-head business: More than 40 percent of women say they've woken from

sleep while having an orgasm that arose from no physical stimulation whatsoever, according to a survey of more than 2,600. “It's not surprising that the body goes through a cycle of sexual response when asleep,” says Carol Rinkleib Ellison, Ph.D., author of *Women's Sexualities* (New Harbinger Publications) and codeveloper of the survey. “Maybe your partner is away, or maybe you read something erotic before bed. It's your body taking care of you.”

WHO KNEW?

You can guarantee a good time.

Because of your ever-fluctuating hormones, there's actually a specific time in your cycle when your shags may be super satisfying: Hello, ovulation! Of course, we humans are wired to want sex midcycle to ensure survival of the species and all that, but whether you want a baby or not, bedding down then is sure to provide an extra thrill. (Just don't forget to reach for your protection.) This is the time of the month when your level of testosterone—one of the driving factors behind libido—is highest, says Edward L. Klaiber, M.D., an endocrinologist in private practice in Worcester, Massachusetts. You may find that your body, especially the nipples and clitoris, practically hums with arousal. Even better, the testosterone peak often intensifies orgasms, leading to a climax that you literally feel from head to toe. And when it comes to your Os, there's no doubt that bigger is better!

WHO KNEW?

Even a shy woman can fantasize her way to more satisfaction.

“Half of the enjoyment of sex is derived from the anticipation that something good is going to happen,” says Susan Kellogg-Spadt, Ph.D., director of sexual medicine at the Pelvic & Sexual Health Institute of Philadelphia. “That excitement starts in your mind.” One of the easiest ways to generate it is to fire up your mental movie projector once in a while. “For some reason, women are taught to believe that when they’re in a long-term relationship, their partner’s touch, smell and look alone should cause fireworks every time. It doesn’t work like that,” she says. In fact, having a nice, juicy fantasy life actually contributes to a healthy sex life: Thinking about your personal McDreamy stimulates the release of dopamine in the brain, which in turn jump-starts your romantic thoughts and behaviors. (So all that TV time *can* pay off!) Imagining a scene that may not include your partner or your bedroom is nothing to be ashamed about. “Fantasy does not represent a desire for it to be a reality,” Kellogg-Spadt adds. “It’s not a sign that you’re sick or being unfaithful or want to be out of your relationship. It’s a type of dream, an idea, a way of helping your brain engage in the moment.”

WHO KNEW?

The G-spot serves your greater good.

First, there was debate over whether the G-spot even existed. Then there was a question of its importance. Now sex researchers know not only that the little pleasure region exists, but that stimulating it actually activates a bodywide pain-blocking mechanism. The effect doesn’t last long—about eight minutes, unless you continue to stimulate the area—but the result is significant enough that it’s been shown to reduce discomfort associated with arthritis, whiplash, postoperative pain and more, says Beverly Whipple, Ph.D., secretary general of the World Association for Sexual Health in Voorhees, New Jersey. “And because cervical dilation stimulates the same nerve pathways as the G-spot area, scientists think natural vaginal delivery would be a lot more uncomfortable without this natural analgesic effect.” That said, it’s certainly no epidural.

The elusive, almond-sized spot is situated on the front wall of your vagina and feels harder than the surrounding tissue; you can find it most easily by inserting a finger and crooking it as if you were making a come-here gesture. (Note: The area will be easier to locate when you’re aroused because it swells.) If contortion isn’t in your repertoire, spring for an angled-tip vibrator designed for G-spot stimulation.

WHO KNEW?

Love may hurt, but sex shouldn’t.

Sure, you may experience some isolated discomfort now and then from an extra rigorous romp or certain hormonal changes (you may have less lubrication right after your period, for instance). But sex shouldn’t be painful every time. If it is, there’s a chance you are one of the 1 in 15 women who has vulvar vestibulitis syndrome, Kellogg-Spadt says. VVS is an

inflammation of the small mucus-secreting glands located at the opening of the vagina; it causes a severe burning pain during penetration. Though the trigger isn’t known, doctors suspect chronic vaginal infections may play a role. Fortunately, once VVS is diagnosed, the condition can be treated, often by applying topical creams. In the meantime, hold off on intercourse, but don’t stop all sexual play. “Women with VVS can still have oral sex and can self-pleasure very successfully,” Kellogg-Spadt says. So don’t suffer in silence: If you’re in pain, for the love of latex, make an appointment.

WHO KNEW?

The journey matters as much as reaching the oh-so-lovely destination.

Joy Davidson, a certified sex therapist in New York City and author of *Fearless Sex* (Fair Winds Press), says it’s the ebb and flow of prolonged arousal, not necessarily an orgasm, that keeps us coming back for more. “Surprisingly, the women who seek therapy because they have little desire for sex are often orgasmically gifted—they can come easily and often,” Davidson says. “That’s the paradox of their situation, and it exposes the myth that being orgasmic is always enough to inspire desire.” Instead of racing to the finish, concentrate on delaying your climax as long as possible. Repeatedly letting that sexual energy build and recede will result in a much more intense release. “If you put a vibrator to the clitoris, most women can have an orgasm,” Davidson adds. “There’s certainly nothing wrong with that, but partners give us so much more. A vibrator can’t talk you into a state of wild arousal, but a partner who knows the magic words can take you places that no electronic buddy ever will.”

WHO KNEW?

Safe, effective sexual enhancers exist.

Google the word *libido*, and you’ll get more than a million hits, many of them hawking a variety of supplements and potions guaranteeing a remarkable roll in the hay. But only two of them—Zestra Feminine Arousal Fluid and ArginMax—are backed by independent, peer-reviewed studies on women. Zestra, an oil that you apply to the genital area, has been shown to significantly increase arousal, sensation and pleasure, according to research published in the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*. Studies on ArginMax, an herbal supplement that includes ginseng, ginkgo biloba and L-arginine, revealed that women experienced more frequent orgasms and increased desire compared with those who took a placebo. Whipple says anyone can try Zestra, but check with your doctor before taking ArginMax, especially if you’re on a blood thinner or other medication.

WHO KNEW?

You might like porn.

About 30 percent of movie-on-demand revenue is generated by adult films, and it’s highly unlikely that guys are the only ones tuning in. In fact, 30 million women visited adult websites in one month alone, according to data collected by ComScore, a research firm in Reston, Virginia. “Women

experience sexuality in the broader context of their world. If you're worried about financial issues or your job, for instance, it's hard to be present," Kellogg-Spadt says. But when you're tuned in to a steamy scene, it's difficult to focus on much of anything else. Not sure where to start? Sadie Allison, Ph.D., founder of TickleKitty.com, a sex-advice site for women, often recommends the following titles: *Jenna's Provocateur*, directed by Jenna Jameson, features lots of great clothes and techniques to imitate; *Teradise Island* was shot in Hawaii and has electrifying guy-girl scenes; and *Sultry* is packed with a series of sexy vignettes and offers an artsy intro to porn.

WHO KNEW?

You can buy sex appeal in a bottle.

Nearly 75 percent of people who applied a synthetic pheromone were found to be more sexually attractive to the opposite sex, according to a study by researchers at San Francisco State

University in California. Fewer than 25 percent of those who used the placebo could say the same. You can mix the colorless, odorless liquids with your favorite perfume or his aftershave or cologne. One bottle costs about \$100 at AthenaInstitute.com (Athena Pheromone 10:13 is meant for women; Athena Pheromone 10X is intended for men).

Looking at porn together
can take your mind
off everyday stresses.



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WHO KNEW?

A weekly romp keeps you healthy.

Of course sex feels good, but it's also good for you. One major benefit appears to be a more regular menstrual cycle, says Winnifred B. Cutler, Ph.D., reproductive biologist and founder of the Athena Institute for Women's Wellness in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania (yep, she developed the synthetic pheromones, too). Her research has shown that weekly sex also improves women's estrogen levels, and more estrogen is linked to increased

WHO KNEW?

He loves your every scent.

No need to stress over finding the perfect sexy perfume to wear on a date. It turns out that pretty much any pleasant odor increases blood flow and therefore your guy's arousal level, according to studies conducted at the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago. The scent-induced increases in excitement ranged from 2 to 5 percent for cranberry, floral perfumes and cheese pizza (in that order), to an amazing 40 percent for lavender and pumpkin pie mixed together. The women in the study actually experienced reduced vaginal blood flow when exposed to the aromas of barbecued meat, cherries

and...men's cologne. Meet in the middle: A spritz of lavender on your sheets could help get you both in the mood.

WHO KNEW?

When it comes to penis size, almost anything is normal.

Finding reliable data on the average male endowment is, as you might guess, difficult. But if sales at Condomania.com are any indication, guys come in all shapes and sizes. More than 30,000 men downloaded the site's fit kit in order to purchase from a line that was available in nearly a hundred sizes ranging from 3 to 10 inches in length and almost every possible width. Surprising as that is (10 inches?!), here is the real shocker: No one size

ever made up more than 5 percent of sales, says Condomania president Adam Glickman. (The fit kit and custom-size line are expected to be back on the market by year's end.)

Before you roll your eyes at the thought of thousands of guys measuring their member, consider this: A study conducted at Indiana University's Kinsey Institute in Bloomington found that custom condoms tend to break less than the one-size-fits-most variety, and they're more likely to be used regularly. They cost about the same as a typical condom. Either way, the benefits for women in particular are significant: If your partner is a bit smaller than the average Joe, you won't have to stress about slippage or deal with 3 inches of rolled up condom interfering with your fun. And should he be larger, you can get busy without worrying about a breakage accident. The long and short of it? Anything that eliminates bedroom anxiety is a very good thing. ■