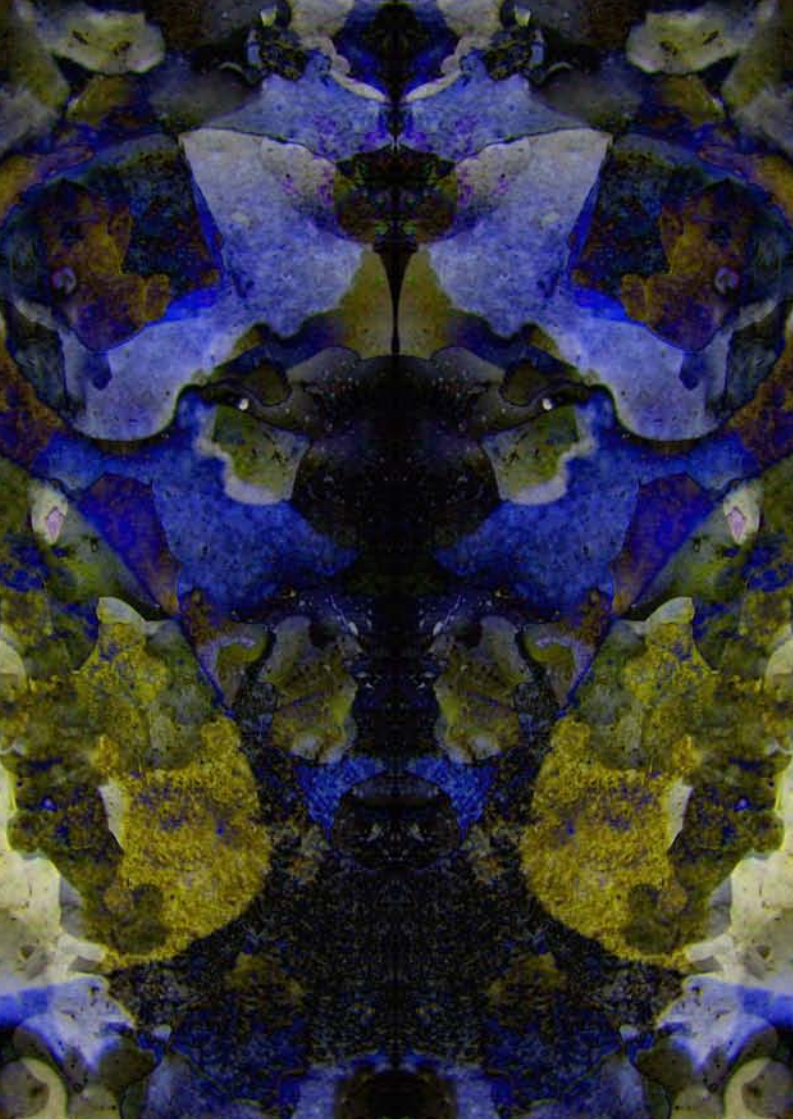


HOW TO INCREASE YOUR ENJOYMENT OF SEX

for men and
their partners



“Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.

Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.”

Definition of sexual health, World Health Organisation

SAFER SEX

Using condoms for penetrative sex is the best way to protect yourself and your partners from Sexually Transmitted Infections, including HIV. Condoms also offer good protection from unwanted pregnancy. In the text of this booklet, we have chosen not to refer constantly to the use of condoms. Instead, we encourage you to make your own decisions about protecting yourself and others in each instance of sexual activity you undertake.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

It's important to remember that resolving any difficulties or dissatisfactions with sex involves:

- having sex only when you want to, and only the kinds of sex that you want;
- meeting your own conditions for good sex (for example having privacy, not feeling rushed or pressured, feeling able to trust your partner);
- recognising when you are tense and learning how to relax;
- getting the kind of stimulation you like and focusing on this stimulation; and
- being able to enjoy having sex rather than worrying about your performance.

The exercises in the following sections offer a starting point for becoming more in tune with your body and improving your enjoyment of sex.

EXERCISES YOU CAN DO ON YOUR OWN

EXERCISE *a few minutes a day*

KEGEL EXERCISES

One way of enhancing your sexual experience is to strengthen the pelvic muscles that run from the pubic bone to the base of the spine like an 'elasticated hammock' underneath the pelvis. The contractions of these muscles produce the feelings at orgasm. The ageing process or lack of exercise can contribute to a weakening of these muscles and men who practise these exercises report stronger and more pleasurable orgasms.

You can feel these muscles by contracting your anus as though you're trying to hold back a bowel movement, or by stopping and starting the flow of urine when you're peeing. At first you might find you're contracting your stomach or thigh muscles as well, but with practice you can squeeze just the pelvic muscles.

Begin by squeezing and releasing these muscles fifteen times, a couple of times a day. You can do this without anyone noticing, for example while driving, watching TV or reading. Continue doing the Kegel exercises every day, gradually increasing the number until you can do about 50. At this point, instead of releasing the muscles

immediately, you can hold the contractions for a few seconds. You can do both the long and short Kegels a couple of times a day, or alternate between them.

Most people don't notice results until after about a month or six weeks, but if you practise them consistently you will feel the difference.

EXERCISE *15 minutes*

GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR BODY

Sensual or sexual pleasure results from the interactions between physical sensations and thoughts and feelings. Knowing how to both give pleasure to your body and accept pleasure from it can help you get what you want sexually with a partner or on your own.

Reserve 30 minutes for yourself and relax in a way that you enjoy — perhaps by having a bath or by doing some relaxation exercises. Create an atmosphere that you find pleasing, for example using lighting, temperature and sound. When you're naked and comfortable, warm some body oil or lotion in your hands and then smooth it on your body. You could start with your arms and hands and move down to the rest of your body. Or, if you prefer, start with your feet and legs. Try to focus your attention on the feel of your hands on your body.

Experiment with touching yourself in different ways, and try to make your body feel good rather than turned on. Be gentle with yourself. Remember that the point of the exercise is simply to enjoy the pleasure that your touch on your body is giving you.

Try to practise this exercise as many times per week as you can fit in without feeling pressured. It won't be easy to relax and enjoy these feelings if the exercise feels like a chore.

EXERCISE *20 minutes*

ENJOYING MORE INTIMATE TOUCH

The aim of this exercise is to discover the kinds of touch you find most pleasurable, and to practise focusing on the sensations you feel when you touch yourself in these ways.

Ensure that you have complete privacy, and explore your genitals, using a hand mirror to look at yourself if you like. Try touching your scrotum gently, and then run your hand up and down your penis. Explore the sensations you like best. If you are uncircumcised, try drawing back the foreskin very slightly and then pull it up again to cover the head of your penis. The head can be very sensitive. If you are circumcised, move the

skin covering your penis, squeezing and releasing. Vary the pressure of your touch – try grasping yourself firmly as well as stroking various areas of your penis very gently. You can also vary the speed of your movements. Some men like slow downward movements and a rapid upwards movement, others the other way around. Some men like the feeling of a vibrator around their genitals and you might like to try this too.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

- *What if my mind keeps wandering and that makes it hard to relax and focus on the sensations?*

This is natural. Just keep trying to bring your attention back to the exercise. It's important that you aren't tense, in a hurry, or very preoccupied with something else. If you are, or if you don't really have enough time to do the exercise, leave it for another time. You may be feeling nervous or self-conscious if this is the first time you have explored enjoying your sexuality in this way. Or perhaps you're putting lots of pressure on yourself to feel turned on or to have an orgasm. Try to just relax and enjoy the sensations and not worry about how turned on you are.

Developing fantasies in your mind can help you to enjoy masturbation more, because it can help you feel more turned on and also help keep your mind focused. You might like to experiment — imagining different scenarios with different fantasy partners in different settings.

Give yourself permission to not judge yourself on these fantasies. Fantasies are not facts! You can experiment with scenarios and activities that you may never wish to try in real life. If you find fantasising difficult, you could experiment with erotic writing or images to stimulate your imagination.

NEXT STEPS

The next step involves doing some exercises with a partner. If you're in a relationship and have stopped having physical contact because of sexual problems, then it is important to re-establish that contact before you carry on. If this applies to you and your partner, read the section on re-establishing physical affection on page 18 and follow the suggestions there before continuing with the following exercises.



EXERCISES YOU CAN DO WITH A PARTNER

Before starting any of these exercises, both you and your partner should read and discuss them. Talk about your feelings about doing the programme and sort out any issues that are raised. It's common for couples to have some disagreements, but if you sort them out as soon as they appear, you'll get more benefit from the programme.

These exercises are like a training programme. You won't need to do them forever, but how long you need to do them depends mainly on how often you do them, so you need to work out an agreement about frequency. However, don't do more than one exercise a day — twice a week is a good starting point.

You also need to agree that neither of you will push the other faster than they want to go. It's important not to rush through the programme, as this just puts pressure on you both. The point of this is to allow yourselves to enjoy taking things at a pace that feels right for you, not what you think someone else expects. It may feel a little strange to begin with, because you're doing things differently than before. Only stop if you feel uncomfortable, and, if this happens, do something else before going back to the activity. You could agree with your partner beforehand

what you will do together to relax before starting again — such as cuddling, holding hands or talking.

Don't make these exercises the only physical contact you have with your partner, either physically or emotionally. Make sure you also have mutually satisfying time, unrestricted by the programme, and that you have ways of expressing affection physically without needing to end up having sex.

You might want to do the exercises both ways round so that it feels fair, or you might prefer to focus on the partner who would benefit most from them — it's up to you to decide together how you use them. The minutes given for each exercise are just suggestions.

EXERCISE *20-30 minutes*

SENSUAL TOUCH WITHOUT TOUCHING GENITALS

This exercise is designed to help you feel more comfortable being touched more intimately when you have been feeling anxious about sex, or when you and your partner want to get 'reacquainted' with each other's bodies to improve your sex life. Talk to each other before you start the exercise about what you both feel more or less comfortable with, so you can ensure that you make the experience as positive as possible.

Have your partner arouse you by touching your body, not including your genitals, using their hands, mouth, hair or anything else — they can be as creative as they like! Focus on the sensations and feelings you get from different kinds of touch — these may include feeling sexually aroused as well as other sensations, such as ticklishness. Give feedback and suggestions, without being critical. If you find your mind wandering, bring it back to focusing on the sensations. Your partner's job is to check out with you what you like (and don't like) and to respond to your suggestions.

You can take it in turns to be the 'giver' or the 'receiver'. Use this exercise to develop communication between you and your partner about what touch feels best to each of you. Focusing on the sensations in your genitals during these activities will keep your mind where it belongs during sex and away from negative thoughts and performance worries.

This exercise should not include genital touching, sex or orgasm. It is important that both you and your partner understand this rule and stick to it, as it helps to take away anxiety, especially if one of you has been finding sex difficult recently. If either you or your partner try and bend the rules, you may undo the progress you have made, and make it harder to trust each other in these exercises in the future.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

- *Help! I feel embarrassed being naked in front of my partner!*

Try at first to do the exercise clothed or partly clothed, then gradually aim to do the exercises naked when you feel more comfortable. Some couples find it relaxing to take a warm bath or a shower together first. Talk to your partner about your worries. It may be that they have similar worries and together you can find a solution.

After you have practised this exercise for a couple of weeks and feel comfortable, talk together about your feelings about moving on to the next exercise.

“Sex is more like dancing than digestion.”

Dr Leonore Tiefer



EXERCISE *30 minutes*

SENSUAL TOUCH INCLUDING GENITALS

Now you've explored the kinds of non-sexual touching you both enjoy, use the same turn-taking format to explore more intimate touch.

Get yourselves relaxed and comfortable, enjoying touching each other without genital contact. Whoever is the 'giver' first can gradually move to more intimate exploration from the touch that they will be used to giving by now.

Having done the previous exercise, you will have a lot of experience of giving each other feedback about touch that feels good and touch that feels less good. You may have also done the exercises on your own, and so will be more aware of the kind of touch that you like.

Keep your attention on the sensations you feel and what it feels like to be touched in this way. Remember that the point of this exercise is not to produce orgasms, but rather to learn (or re-learn) how to be intimate and make each other feel good. If an orgasm happens as a by-product of this, that's fine, but do not make it a focus.

Do this exercise once or twice a week for a couple of weeks, or until you feel completely comfortable being touched. As you and your partner become more in tune with each other's bodies, you should find that your anxiety about sex decreases and your enjoyment increases. Use what you have learned both alone and together in conversations about your sex life and how you would like it to develop in the future.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

- *What if I can't stay relaxed and enjoy the sensations during this exercise?*

It may be that you can't get your partner to stimulate you in ways you like, in which case you need to talk about what's going wrong. Perhaps you need to go back to one of the solo exercises and focus on finding the kinds of touch you enjoy. If you can enjoy this touch when you're on your own, but not when you are with your partner, then it could be something in your relationship that's getting in the way. If you want to explore this further, you might want to contact one of the organisations listed on page 20.

You won't always feel like you want sensual touch or sex. If this happens, let your partner know. You could say something like, "I guess I just don't feel like it today." Then discuss what you'd both like to do instead. They might want you to sexually stimulate them, or you might want to talk about what's happening, or to go and do something else together.

- *What if one or both of us gets turned on during the exercise, but we've agreed not to have sex?*

Sticking to the rules is important, as it allows you both to relax and not focus on penetration or orgasms. Agree beforehand what to do if this happens. For example, you could masturbate together or separately, or you could cuddle until these feelings subside.

Once you're comfortable with these exercises, you will be better able to enjoy sexual contact with your partner and find it easier to communicate about sex. After doing this programme, many couples find that the sex they have is less focused on orgasms, and that this takes the pressure off and makes it more enjoyable, more creative and more satisfying.

- *What if my partner wonders why I haven't had an orgasm?*

If it's a regular partner, you may want to find a way of talking to them about it, and explain that you don't always come, and that it isn't their fault if you don't. It's also a good idea not to apologise — you haven't done anything wrong and there's nothing to be ashamed of. Perhaps tell them what's happening, as honestly and directly as you can — this is respectful to both yourself and your partner, and may help you to feel more comfortable.

- *What if I still have problems?*

You might find it helpful to read other leaflets in this series — see the list on the back cover. You can pick them up from the leaflet racks at the clinic, or ask a clinician for a copy. Or you could ask your doctor about getting referred to a psychosexual counsellor or therapist, or contact one of the organisations listed on page 20.

RE-ESTABLISHING PHYSICAL AFFECTION


If you are in a relationship and have stopped having physical contact because of sexual problems, then it is important to re-establish that contact.

If there are any relationship issues that are getting in the way, you may need to work these out first. If this is something you would like further help with, there is a list on page 20 of organisations that offer psychosexual/relationship therapy.

You can begin to reconnect physically by holding hands, hugging, taking baths or showers together, doing light body-rubs, or anything else that both of you are comfortable with. You need to feel comfortable being physical with your partner, and these kinds of activities are a good way to get there.

If you feel tense or anxious about the physical contact, go back to something that feels more comfortable until you feel okay to try the contact again.

Make sure that the conditions you need for sexual activity are met. These may include a comfortable environment, privacy, knowing you have sufficient time or trusting your partner to stop if you want them to.



With casual partners, it can be helpful to read the partner exercises for ideas about how to deal with any possible problems. It's up to you to decide whether you want to tell your partner that you want to do an exercise, whether you say you'd like to try such-and-such, or whether you simply say you'd like to take things more slowly for a bit.

During any kind of physical contact with a partner, you should be focusing your attention on any pleasurable sensations you feel, but also noticing whether you're tense or relaxed. If you're tense, do something to get more relaxed (take some deep breaths, consciously relax your muscles, talk about it, slow down the pace), even during non-sexual contact.

Try to focus on enjoying other sexual activities than penetration. You may even find that you enjoy other activities as much as, or more than, penetration. If this is the case, you may want to vary the activities you do with a partner. Not everyone has penetrative sex all of the time, and some couples choose not to have penetrative sex at all.

RECOMMENDED READING:

The New Male Sexuality: The Truth about Men, Sex and Pleasure

Bernie Zilbergeld, Bantam Doubleday Dell

Sexual Health for Men: The 'At your Fingertips' Guide

Phillip Kell and Vanessa Griffiths, CLASS Publishing

Overcoming Sexual Problems: A self-help guide using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques

Vicki Ford, Robinson

The Relate Guide to Sex In Loving Relationships

Sarah Litvinoff, Vermillion

FINDING PSYCHOSEXUAL/RELATIONSHIP THERAPY:

For further information about the services we provide, including psychosexual therapy, STI testing and sexual health advice, visit www.londonSTItesting.nhs.uk

British Association for Sexual and Relationship Therapy (BASRT)

Information and lists of individual and couple psychosexual therapists

<http://www.basrt.org.uk> 020 8543 2707

Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health

www.sashuk.org.uk

PACE

Sexual health and relationship counselling for lesbians and gay men www.pacehealth.org.uk

RELATE

Psychosexual counselling for men and women of all sexualities www.relate.org.uk

Relationship Counselling for London

www.counselling4london.com 020 8938 2431

GMFA

Groups and workshops for men who have sex with men
www.gmfa.org.uk

This booklet has been written by the Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Team and edited, designed and illustrated by the Good Sexual Health Team. Both are part of Camden Provider Services.

For further information about the services we provide, visit www.londonSTItesting.nhs.uk

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www.camdenproviderservices.nhs.uk**

OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE:

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR ENJOYMENT OF SEX
for women and their partners

WORRIED ABOUT STAYING HARD?
for men and their partners

ANAL PLAY
for men and for women

PROBLEMS CONTROLLING WHEN YOU COME?
for men and their partners

**DIFFICULTIES WITH PENETRATION
OR PAINFUL SEX?**
for women and their partners