

# PROBLEMS CONTROLLING WHEN YOU COME?

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.

This booklet is designed for men who have difficulties controlling when they come, and feel that it is a problem in their sex life.

It is relatively common for men to feel they come too quickly. Medical professionals sometimes call this premature ejaculation. However, there is wide variation in what men consider to be 'too quickly'. For some, it might be ejaculating during foreplay, while for others it might be after many minutes of penetration. Sometimes men ejaculate before there has been any stimulation of their penis.

It is much less common for men to feel they take too long to come (which is sometimes called retarded ejaculation). This is most often caused by the side-effects of prescribed or recreational drugs. If you are concerned about taking a long time to come or not coming at all on a regular basis, it might be a good idea to talk to a doctor.

## DOES IT MATTER IF YOU COME TOO QUICKLY?

Coming more quickly than you'd like is very common — up to half of all men say there have been times when they have come more quickly than they wanted to.

It's not necessarily anything to worry about, and there are even some situations in which it's considered normal, for instance:

- highly stimulating situations, or when it's been a long time since last having sex or masturbating;
- when men are young — for a man in his 20s the average time between penetration and ejaculation is less than 3 minutes; and
- when a man is tired, stressed or under pressure.

However, if it is happening regularly, it can become frustrating and unsatisfying for both you and your partners. It can also cause tension in a relationship. If this is the case for you, it's worth taking it seriously and doing something about it.

## WHY DO PEOPLE COME TOO QUICKLY?

Occasionally there are physical causes, for example medical conditions such as prostatitis. But it's far more likely to be caused by one of the following:

- worrying about your performance, particularly with new partners or when one or both of you is inexperienced (this is sometimes called performance anxiety);
- worrying about catching or passing on sexually transmitted infections (including HIV);
- feeling guilty (many men have grown up believing that sex is sinful, dirty, or shameful);
- if many of your experiences of having sex have had to be rushed and/or secret;
- relationship issues, for example if there are unresolved arguments, or pressure to have sex;
- differences between partners' sex drives or expectations about how long sex should last; and
- other worries or stresses, for example about work or money.

## WHAT DOESN'T REALLY HELP?

- Thinking distracting or non-arousing thoughts during sex;
- using desensitising anaesthetic creams or condoms;
- spending less time on foreplay;
- using two condoms to reduce your sensitivity, as this makes condoms much more likely to break;
- drinking alcohol; and
- using Viagra or similar drugs.

Although all of these things may help delay when you come, they won't help you to have more control over when you come, and are likely to make sex less enjoyable. The point of this booklet is to help you learn to be in control of your orgasms, so that you can enjoy sex more.



## WHAT DOES HELP?

The key things are:

- to remember that there is nothing wrong with your penis, and
- to become more focused on erotic sensations and feelings when you're in sexual situations. It's more important to enjoy giving and receiving pleasure than it is to try and judge how well or badly you performed.

Having said that, there are exercises that can help you learn to have better control over when you come. Two of them can be found on the following pages.

**“I’m an incredible lover — I practice a lot when I’m alone.”**

*Woody Allen*

## **EXCERCISE**

### **THE STOP-START TECHNIQUE**

You can do this alone or with a partner. It's fairly simple. Stimulate your penis in ways that you like, or get your partner to do so. Focus on the sensations in your penis and the rest of your body. When your arousal level becomes fairly high (but before you feel close to coming), stop the stimulation.

Leave it for 20 – 30 seconds, or until your arousal level has gone down. Your erection may go down as well, which is fine. Then begin the stimulation again and proceed as before. Repeat the exercise once or twice more. The last time you do it, you can continue the stimulation until you come.

If your erection doesn't come back, don't worry. If you're alone, you can simply return to the exercise another time or another day, and if you're with a partner you can either stimulate them instead, or you can leave it for another time.

Practising this exercise will help you learn to recognise the sensations you feel just before ejaculating, and how to slow down or limit the stimulation on your penis to prevent this happening. You can do this exercise several times a week, and eventually you will find that you have more control over when you come. Once you

have more confidence in your ability to slow down, you will be able to use the same techniques when you are having sex with a partner.

## **EXERCISE**

### THE SQUEEZE TECHNIQUE

If you have a partner, you can also use a variation on the stop-start technique. This is known as the squeeze technique.

As before, your partner stimulates your penis until you're getting close to ejaculating. Instead of stopping altogether, your partner then firmly squeezes your penis just under the head, using their thumb and forefinger. This will decrease the sensation of being about to come, and your erection may go down somewhat. You can then continue with stimulation, as with the stop-start technique.

You can use this to prolong sex as well as doing it as an exercise. You may need to practice these techniques for a while before you notice an improvement. However, it's worth taking a bit of time to learn them; because it will prolong and intensify sexual pleasure for both you and your partner. Lasting longer in sex gets easier with practice.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- *Does having sex more often help?*

Although it is common for men to come more quickly after not having sex for a while, it doesn't necessarily work the other way around. However, you can continue having sex or pleasuring your partner after you come — it doesn't have to mean the end of enjoying each other.

- *How long will treatment take?*

It may take several weeks or months before you feel you have achieved the control you want, so it's important to be patient and not put too much pressure on yourself. To stop you getting bored and frustrated, make sure you have at least one session each week where you masturbate or have sex without doing the exercise, and just enjoy yourself.

- *What if I still have problems?*

You might find it helpful to read other booklets in this series — see the back cover. You can pick them up from 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 overleaf.



## 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](http://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](http://www.sashuk.org.uk)

**Relationship Counselling for London**

[www.counselling4london.com](http://www.counselling4london.com)      020 8938 2431

## **PACE**

Sexual health and relationship counselling for lesbians and gay men [www.pacehealth.org.uk](http://www.pacehealth.org.uk)

## **RELATE**

Psychosexual counselling for men and women of all sexualities [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

## **GMFA**

Groups and workshops for men who have sex with men [www.gmfa.org.uk](http://www.gmfa.org.uk)

**This booklet has been written by the Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Team and produced in conjunction with 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](http://www.londonSTItesting.nhs.uk)**

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**OTHER TITLES IN THIS SERIES:**

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for men and their partners

**ANAL PLAY**  
for men and for women

**HOW TO INCREASE YOUR ENJOYMENT OF SEX**  
for men and their partners

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

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