Self pleasure, also known as masturbation, specifically refers to touching yourself sexually in a way that feels good. "Masturbation" is a term developed in the 1600's to put a negative, moral meaning to pleasuring oneself sexually, and was related to religious-cultural norms in Europe at that time. However, just saying that something is bad doesn't make it bad. Massaging skin, arousing blood flow and operating the nerve systems that allow for sexual pleasure hasn't been scientifically shown to harm a person in any way. Massaging lotion into your hands and rubbing your palms together to bring blood flow to your fingers uses exactly the same processes, but no one says that is bad for you.

Why self-pleasure?

Beyond feeling good, self-pleasure can:

- Exercise your internal pelvic floor muscles
- Revitalize body tissues by increasing blood flow
- Enhance immune system function (from higher levels of prolactin produced at orgasm)
- Fight insomnia
- Reduce depression
- Lessen period-related (menstrual) discomfort
- Release emotional tension and stress
- Lessen pressure or expectations. Arousal builds over time; the more you try, the more arousal you can explore. While some enjoy "quickie" sessions, others like to take an hour (or longer) to cultivate different sensations. Enjoy your discoveries and take a break at any point you choose. If you're seeking an orgasm specifically, give yourself permission to play and experiment. You'll find a space that is comfortable and private so you can fully relax. It's hard to become aroused when you're worried about being interrupted. Turn off the phone, settle your kitchen, pets, children, etc.

Get set...

Give yourself permission to play and experiment. This is about finding out what feels pleasurable without pressure or expectations. Arousal builds over time; the more you play, the more arousal you can explore. While some enjoy "quickie" sessions, others like to take an hour (or longer) to cultivate different sensations. Enjoy your discoveries and take a break at any point you choose. If you're seeking an orgasm specifically, give yourself permission to play and experiment. You'll find a space that is comfortable and private so you can fully relax. It's hard to become aroused when you're worried about being interrupted. Turn off the phone, settle your kitchen, pets, children, etc.

Release your hands.

Bring your focus (and your hands) to your genital area and explore the sensation of touching there. Some touches may feel electric or ticklish and you may feel them ripple through your whole body. Once you find a kind of touch you really like, stick with it for a while and see how your body responds. Let yourself play this way for as long as you like.

Orgasmic Experiences

As you continue to self-pleasure, you may (or may not) experience an orgasm. When you approach orgasm you will experience a buildup of pleasurable sensations with increasing muscle tension and excitement. Some describe it feeling as though you are approaching the top of a hill. Just keep on doing what feels best and allow the sensations to carry you over the top of the hill. Orgasm feels different for everyone. Many people describe orgasm as an intense sensation of release and pleasure along with a series of muscle spasms and throbbing sensations deep inside the pelvis caused by contractions of the muscles of the pelvic floor. It's not uncommon for it to take 20-40 minutes or more of clitoral contractions of the muscles of the pelvic floor. It's not uncommon for it to take 20-40 minutes or more of clitoral stimulation for a person to reach orgasm. If it seems to take a long time, that is completely normal. If your mind starts wandering to other things like your to-do list or what to make for dinner, try re-focusing your attention by changing your touch, speed, or technique. Or try a vibrator. Vibrators don't get tired and they provide consistent stimulation that can shorten the amount of time it takes to reach orgasm. You might also revisit your favorite fantasy, read some erotica or watch an erotic movie as you self-pleasure.
the arm of a sofa, it might be difficult to get that type of
stimulation with a partner. Try shifting your position or adding
a hand between yourself and the sofa now and then as you pleasure yourself.

Will self-pleasure cause health problems?
No. There are no health risks associated with sexual arousal from self-pleasure. If you are doing something that doesn’t feel good, either mentally or physically, try something different.

When is too much, well, too much?
If you can live your life, taking care of all of the work, family, sleep and other self-care activities that help you be healthy, then your self-pleasuring schedule is not too much. However, if you are neglecting parts of your life leading to unsafe or unhealthy outcomes, then find a sex therapist and discuss your habits.

Things to add:
- While you touch your clitoris with one hand use your other hand to explore your nipples, vaginal opening, thighs, or anal opening.
- Squeeze your legs together or squeeze a blanket, pillow, or even a balled up pair of socks between your thighs and against your vulva.
- Ride the edges of bathtubs or furniture which adds pressure plus complete hip movement.
- Running water can also be a great toy. Try a hand-held shower head, a Jacuzzi jet, or scoot down on your back in the bathtub so that water from the tap can move or make some noise. Some people find that thrusting, wagging, gyrating, and moaning or sighing can intensify the sensations of arousal, or be arousing all on their own.
- Experience vaginal fullness, or internal motion or thrusting. You can insert one or more fingers or a shaft-shaped toy into your vagina. Try stroking, pressing, circling, or vibrating just barely inside, an inch or two in, or as deeply as you can reach.
- Some people like pressure on the front wall of the vagina towards the belly button. Try pressure either just a couple inches inside or more deeply.