



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

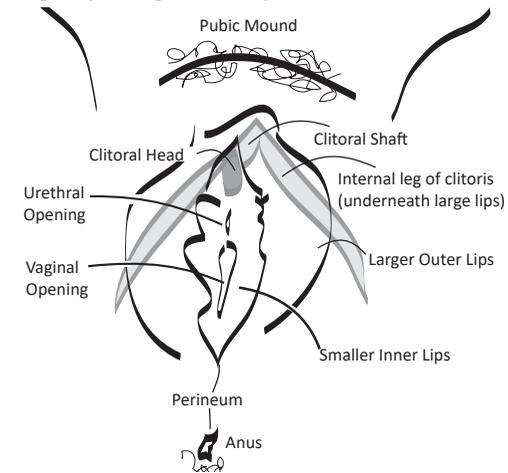
Self-pleasure is also a way to learn what feels good to you without worrying about what anyone else thinks or needs. It can help you learn to build your arousal to higher levels, become orgasmic, or intensify your experience of orgasm.

You can pleasure your own body with your own hands when you’re alone or when you’re with a partner. You can use what you learn in your self-pleasuring sessions to show a partner what you like best. Self-pleasure is also a way to meet your own sexual needs if your partner is tired, ill, or has a different sexual rhythm. Self-pleasure is normal, healthy, and good for your body and your mind.

### On your mark...

There is no one right way to self-pleasure. As long as it doesn’t hurt (and you can still make it to work on time) there’s no wrong way. Pleasuring yourself sexually, on your own terms, is a way to learn how your own body responds sexually and deepen your relationship with the most important person in your life—you!

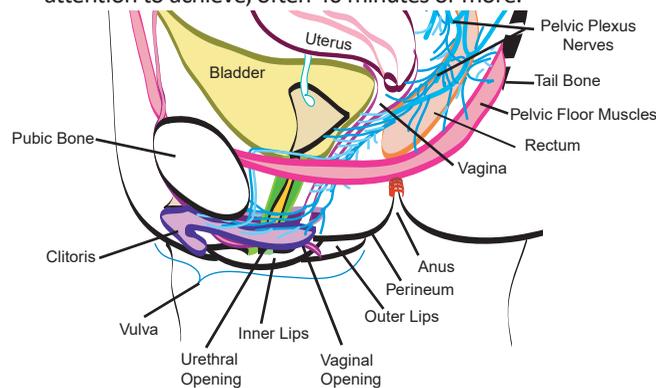
Begin by taking a tour of your vulva:



Your whole body is skin-covered with nerve endings ready to be caressed by your sensitive fingertips. Your face, neck, chest, nipples, stomach, thighs, vulva and anus are all sensitive and within easy reach.

### 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 time you take, 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, remember that this peak sensation can take devoted attention to achieve, often 40 minutes or more.



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.

**Create a mood & engage all your senses.** Many people like to take a warm bath, lie in a sunny room, snuggle under covers, take off clothes, keep on clothes, or gather pillows to prop themselves into comfortable positions. Others enjoy certain kinds of music, lit candles, aromatherapy or incense.

**Add lubricant.** Keeping things slippery reduces friction, intensifies sensation and moisturizes tissues. Some people simply use their own saliva. There are also many types of personal lubricant and each feels different to your hand and body. Buy little sample packs and give ‘em a road test!

Oils aren’t good for your vulva and vagina; they can clog pores, throw off pH and kill good bacteria. Stick with a water-based or silicone-based lubricant for your safety and pleasure.

**Maybe a sex toy?** Some people like things that vibrate or pulsate because these can deepen arousal and provide sensations more consistently than a hand. Vibrating toys come in many different shapes, sizes, colors, and textures. They can be used externally or internally and are available with a variety of types and intensities of vibration.

[See our *How to Choose a Vibrator brochure* for more information on finding one that is right for you.]

### Vibrators aren’t your only options for toys.

Experimentation is fun and helps reveal what is arousing to you. On our website you will find a variety of dildos (non-vibrating, insertable toys), anal toys (vibrating or not), nipple toys (clamps, suction toys) and more.

### Go!!!

**Erotic inspiration starts in your mind.** You can turn up the heat by fantasizing while you self-pleasure. It’s important to focus on the sensations you’re creating in your body, but your mind is free to wander too. Nobody ever needs to know what thoughts turn you on. You can dream up a different storyline every time or you can stick with a favorite scenario that works for you. Your fantasy can be quite vague or specific and explicit right down to the last

detail. The choice is yours. You might enjoy moving your body in the ways you would be moving in your fantasy for a dose of realism. Other ways to fuel your imagination include looking at erotic pictures, reading erotic stories, or watching erotic movies.

**Release your hands.** Choose whatever you find sexually exciting and let your hands roam around your body. If you don’t want to fantasize, instead focus on the sensations of your hands touching your skin. Play with your breasts and nipples, your lips, your stomach, your thighs. Squeeze, rub, brush or tickle your skin.

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 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.

**Pleasure is the goal.** Sexual arousal does not have to include an orgasm. If what you're doing is pleasurable then continue for as long as you like. If you want to stop, that's fine too.

**Slow down.** If you are a person who reaches orgasm more quickly, consider taking your time instead. With pleasure as the goal, why not hold off on the orgasm and instead play and explore for longer? If you have an orgasm, but want to continue to play, go ahead and continue to stimulate yourself and see if your body wants to have another orgasm. If you feel very sensitive at first, try changing to a less direct or intense kind of touching for a little while.

No matter how long it takes for you to reach orgasm, or if you do not reach orgasm at all, we encourage you to play for as long as you wish. *There is no time limit on pleasure.* And the longer you tease yourself before you orgasm the stronger the orgasm will be. If you want more information on orgasms, see our *Orgasms for People with Vulvas and Vaginas* brochure.

### **Common Questions & Answers**

#### **Will self-pleasure ruin me for partner sex?**

No. Liking to touch yourself doesn't mean that you won't like being touched by someone else. Instead it means you're adding new tools to your pleasure kit. Some people find that they can have an orgasm (even their first orgasm) more easily or quickly when they are self-pleasuring without a partner. Orgasms are also easier to have with more practice.

You're not decreasing your ability to orgasm with a partner by pleasuring yourself. When you know what sensations you find pleasurable on your own, you'll be better able to communicate your desires to a partner. What could be sexier?

There is one potential pitfall worth mentioning: it is possible to train yourself to be able to achieve orgasm using only one specific type of stimulation, so vary your technique every now and then to avoid getting into a rut. Avoid always using a technique that partner sex can't possibly duplicate. For example, if you always self-pleasure by straddling and rubbing against something firm, like 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. Therapists are trained to help people work through these types of concerns.

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### **Some techniques to try:**

#### **Hand techniques:**

- Experiment with different kinds of touches on your clitoris, clitoral shaft, clitoral legs (underneath the outer lips), vaginal opening, perineum, and anus.
- Use your fingertips to make long strokes on the inside of the labia.
- Make circular or figure-eight motions with one or several fingers on the clitoris and labia.
- Stroke upward from the vaginal opening to the clitoris. Use one or two fingers to make short, tapping strokes against the side of the clitoral shaft.
- Speed up. Slow down. Switch hands. Tickle, tap, press, rub. More pressure. Less pressure. Flick. Grind.
- Gently pull the lips and clitoral shaft between fingers and thumb. You could also try a rolling motion.
- Use four fingertips (without the thumb) or the palm of your hand on your whole vulva. Press and release. Rub in circles. Bounce or vibrate your hand against your vulva.
- Split your fingers into a "V" shape, and lay them over your vulva with your clitoris where the V comes together. Rub up and down, side to side, or in circular motions with your fingers contacting either side of the shaft of the clitoris.
- Explore the vaginal opening with your fingers. Press or make circles around the opening. Try soft or firm touch.
- Add a lubricant of your choice and try directly tapping or stroking the clitoris or the clitoral shaft.
- Use two hands and hold the base of your clitoral shaft with one hand (using a rolling or stroking motion) and rub or tap the tip with the other hand.

#### **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 flow over your vulva.
- You might like to move or make some noise. Some people find that thrusting, wiggling, 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.

# Self-Pleasuring for People with Vulvas and Vaginas

~learn how to masturbate

~improve your sexual  
connection with yourself  
~become orgasmic,  
if you choose

~add positive energy  
to the world



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