



# Masturbation

- a hands-on guide

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## Do-it-yourself sex

Everyone touches their own body sometimes – the genitals, the nipples, the anus or other parts. Most people who have explored their body soon discover that touching may cause sexual arousal and pleasurable sensations. When people spend time alone touching themselves and often bringing themselves to orgasm, it is called masturbation.

People are enormously inventive, and everyone has their own way of masturbating. While some techniques are more common than others, every individual has virtually unlimited

scope for enjoying masturbation. You can explore masturbation while you are growing up and continue to do so as an adult to find out what you like. It's all about how, where and when, about pressure and speed, clothing and objects. You might enjoy constant variety, or you might find that certain techniques become particular favourites. This guide contains a few suggestions on how to masturbate. Needless to say, there are many more techniques than we could cover in a small booklet like this.

## Masturbation throughout life

The main reason why people masturbate is for pleasure and arousal. For many people, masturbation plays an important role throughout their life, regardless of gender, background and relationship status. Most men and women discover masturbation at an early age, and it becomes a lifelong companion – from childhood, through their teenage years, into adulthood, and on into old age. Masturbation is often people's first way of approaching and expressing their sexuality, and for some people it is the only way of enjoying their sexuality at certain stages or throughout their life. How often

you masturbate may vary over time. There are periods when you want to do it every day, and others when you don't want to at all. Masturbation can be a way to relax for a while or to wind down after a day at school, college or work. By masturbating, young people can discover their body, gain experience of sexual pleasure, and gradually devise new ways to masturbate.

Children masturbate too, but this is seldom talked about. Children's sexuality, and masturbation in particular, remains a sensitive topic that many people find it hard to deal with. It's important to let children explore their bo-

dies by themselves, at their own pace, without adults making them feel ashamed.

People masturbate at different times and in different places. Many people, and perhaps young people in particular, wonder at some point in their life whether they are masturbating too much. Some are concerned that masturbating might adversely affect their sex life in a relationship. Or they might see it as a form of cheating, where they or their partner feel they are unattractive or inadequate. Or they might be jealous of their partner's secret masturbation fantasies. Occasionally there may be cause for

concern: if masturbation is taking precedence over everything else, if you're skipping classes or work, if you've lost interest in sex with your partner, or if you're avoiding human contact so that you can be left to masturbate in peace. But these situations are unusual and are usually a sign that something else is amiss in your life. In such cases, there are people you can turn to for help, such as counsellors and therapists.

Remember that masturbation is usually an outlet for pleasure, arousal and sexual urges. It's a separate form of sexual expression, regardless of whether you have sex with other

people. Masturbation may be an expression of affection for your own body, or it may give you a sense of freedom, with unlimited scope for fantasizing and controlling your enjoyment. There are things you can do while masturbating that you might not be able or want to do with a partner. Fantasies and a desire for pleasure fuel our sexual urges, and masturbation as an expression of those urges may in turn pave the way for new fantasies and knowledge of our body's positive reactions. Our imagination gives us control of our sexual urges and the opportunity to create our own pleasure.

## What happens in the body when we masturbate?

Sexual arousal begins when we receive impressions relayed by the senses. The brain then processes and interprets our thoughts and fantasies, along with the images, sounds, touches, scents and tastes that help to shape them. The brain transmits impulses to various parts of the body, which react accordingly. Lubrication and erection are examples of such reactions.

The physical reaction, known as the sexual response, is no different whether we are having sex with a partner or masturbating.

Masturbation releases various substances in the brain that heighten awareness, affect our memory and even alleviate pain. Some of these substances make us feel better and happier, which enhances the pleasure – so it's no surprise that many people are keen to continue masturbating and to enjoy more, once they have discovered the possibilities of masturbation.

### A brief history of masturbation

Masturbation is sometimes called onanism, a word that originates in the Old Testament (1 Moses 38:8–9). A man called Onan was or-

dered to marry his late brother's wife in order to provide him with heirs. But he allowed his seed – sperm – to fall on the ground instead of inside the woman, so that he would not give his late brother children. God punished him with death. So onanism originally meant interrupted sexual intercourse. The sense of stimulating oneself sexually was introduced in the early 18th century by an English physician and theologian called Bekker, who warned of the alleged dangers of onanism.

Around 1750, a Swiss doctor by the name of Tissot wrote a thesis entitled *L'Onanisme*, in

which he too warned of masturbation's alleged health consequences. He believed it could cause both physical and mental illness, one reason being that the loss of semen weakened the body. Although we nowadays know that masturbation is a common, harmless behaviour, there are still many delusions and taboos surrounding it. The association with sin, sickness and shame has not entirely vanished. Some societies still view masturbation as harmful or shameful. The word masturbation comes from the Latin manus (hand) and stupratio (violate). Violating by hand, in other words – hardly a positive way of putting it.

## Call it what you like

The choice of words not only indicates a reaction to or opinion of masturbation. It may also express a value judgment. Historically, male masturbation has been more prominent, and it was more socially acceptable for men to seek sexual pleasure, masturbation included, and to talk about masturbation. Many men report shared masturbation experiences with their buddies, and the act is not necessarily taboo. However, similar tales from women are very rare, although women too of course have shared masturbation experiences.

whacking  
off the pony

FLYING SOLO  
PETTING THE PUSSY

stroking

wanking  
JERKING  
OFF

smacking  
playing  
with yourself  
!umbos

stroking the  
out

diddling

fingering  
yourself

so  
size  
40

bashing the bishop  
jacking off  
slapping the beaver

tossing

choking the chicken

Boys and men talk about experiences from wanking or jerking off together, but there are still no such stories from women about female masturbation. This is probably because women's sexuality has traditionally been more of a taboo subject than men's, masturbation included. But there is, in fact, a wealth of imaginative words in use out there.

### How to masturbate

People almost always use their hands and fingers to masturbate, because they're easy to control and can reach more or less all parts of the body. They can be used for gentle touching

and more powerful stimulation, and they can hold the various objects that some people use to masturbate. Like the mouth, genitals, nipples and anus, the hands and fingers contain a large number of nerves, so touching can be highly pleasurable.

The most common way to masturbate is probably to stimulate the glans of the clitoris or penis, which contains more nerve endings than any other part of the body. When we're sexually aroused, the erectile tissue in the labia, clitoris and penis fills with blood, further increasing sensitivity. If you want to physically

feel your own arousal, place your hand on the glans or around the shaft of your clitoris or penis, or on your labia, before you become aroused and then feel the erectile tissue engorging. Lubrication, a transparent, oily fluid, is released through the vaginal walls. Arousal can be a gradual process or an instantaneous physical reaction. It can also disappear in seconds if something feels amiss. There are no differences between women and men in terms of physical sexual response and their capacity to enjoy it.

## Massaging, kneading, rubbing

Some people like to do the same thing every time they masturbate, while others alternate between a few favourites or try many different techniques. You can massage, knead, rub, press, prod, roll, slap or squeeze the various parts of the genitals. Which technique feels the most pleasurable at any particular moment varies, depending on how highly aroused you are. By varying the pressure and speed, you can change the sensation. Fondling also feels different depending on which parts of your hands and fingers you use and the direction of the strokes. Gentle fondling using several fingers

may feel right at one moment, while faster, more intensive touching with one finger or the whole hand may produce greater pleasure the next moment, or on another occasion. Many people, both men and women, like to use some sort of extra lubrication while masturbating. You can buy water- and silicone-based lubricants, or you can use your own saliva, unperfumed baby oil, cooking oil or olive oil.

### The clitoris

Many women enjoy moving the prepuce (clitoral hood) up and down over the clitoris with their fingers. Sometimes the glans is so sensitive

that touching it directly is uncomfortable. You can also try stimulating the glans indirectly by moving the inner labia up and down, rubbing from side to side with the prepuce covering the glans and corpus (shaft), or massaging the glans via the outer labia. Some women prefer to massage the corpus of clitoris, which begins at the glans. The corpus engorges when you're aroused, and you can then clearly feel it through the skin against the pubic bone. The crura of clitoris, along the inside of the pubic bone, are also sensitive to touch, and you may find it pleasurable to press or massage them. If you're not wet from natural lubrication, it

may feel good to use saliva or lubricant on your fingers.

### The penis

Many men masturbate by running their hand or fingers back and forth over the glans and down the shaft of the penis. If you have a foreskin, you can hold the shaft and roll your foreskin up and down over the glans. You can also stimulate the glans by making a twisting motion with your fingers around its edge. If you have little or no foreskin, you may find masturbating more pleasurable if you use a lubricant. If you don't have a foreskin, the usual way to

masturbate is by gripping your penis a little way down the shaft and pulling the skin up toward the glans and back.

Some men find it highly pleasurable to touch the underside and back of the glans, and some enjoy gently massaging the frenulum, the string-like band of skin just below the glans. The scrotum too is a sensitive area. You can stimulate it with gentle massage or by holding your testicles a little harder to make the skin taut. You can also try grasping the base of your penis and varying the pressure. Touching the taut skin may feel especially pleasurable.

## Pleasure-giving muscles

You can use your pelvic floor muscles in various ways while masturbating. It may feel good to alternately tense and relax them one or more times by squeezing and then letting go. Different muscles, such as those surrounding the clitoris, between the penis and the anus, around the anus and inside the vagina, can be enjoyed in different ways and can direct your focus to different areas. You can stroke, squeeze or clasp your legs or buttocks. You can place your penis between your thighs and feel it pulsating and the erectile tissue engorging. Your clitoris may respond if you tighten your pelvic floor mus-

cles. Pelvic floor exercises may be pleasurable on their own, but they also work well in combination with other stimulation, when they may enhance the feelings of pleasure. Some people say that, by tensing their pelvic floor muscles at the moment of orgasm, they can enjoy more intense orgasms. Well-trained pelvic floor muscles can also make it easier to reach orgasm.

The area between the genitals and the anus, called the perineum, contains many nerves. Men and women alike may enjoy stimulating this area. Some people like to insert one or two fingers into their anus for a brief or longer pe-

riod. Try contracting your anal sphincter muscle with a finger up your anus. Using lubricant during anal stimulation makes it easier to insert fingers or sex toys. The area in and around the anus, like the genitals, contains many nerve endings, and most people find touching this region pleasurable.

### The G-spot and the P-spot

A few centimetres inside the vagina, in its front wall, is an area called the G-spot (after Ernst Gräfenberg, a German gynecologist). Some women's G-spot feels slightly rough and hardens when stimulated. To stimulate the G-

spot, you need to use fairly vigorous massage or a pressing motion. You can reach the G-spot with your fingers or a specially designed dildo. Stimulating the G-spot makes some women feel they need to urinate, but this sensation may gradually give way to pleasure.

Sometimes people also talk about the male G-spot or P-spot, meaning the prostate gland, which you can feel through the perineum. You can stimulate it with a finger up your anus or an anal plug. The prostate is the size of a chestnut and is located about five centimetres up, in the front wall of the rectum. It produces part

of the seminal fluid. Prostate and G-spot stimulation produces very different sensations in different people.

The nipples too contain a lot of nerves. Many people like to stimulate their nipples while masturbating by gently touching, stroking, squeezing, massaging or pinching them. Sex toys such as vibrators are as effective on the nipples as on other parts of the body, especially when used with lubricant or saliva. Clothes pegs or special breast clamps can produce pleasurable pain.

## Sex toys

Many people use vibrators, dildos and other sex toys when masturbating. You can insert them into your anus or vagina, or use them to stimulate the clitoris, glans, anal region and other parts of the body. Some toys have a built-in vibrator, which can produce pleasant sensations all over. Often you can adjust the speed of the vibrations and find out what feels best on which body parts. Depending on the speed, it may feel different on the scrotum or labia than on and around the nipples. There are many different kinds of sex toys besides dildos: dummy vaginas, breast clamps, balls,

masturbation sleeves shaped like a vagina or anus, and anal plugs. Inserting a dildo or anal plug into your vagina or anus may feel more comfortable if you use lubricant. Sex toys come in different sizes and materials. They can be useful for people with physical disabilities or reduced sensitivity, people experiencing pain or involuntary movements, and people with medical conditions that affect their mobility.

### ... and other accessories

Look around your home for objects you can use for masturbation. Many people like to masturbate in the bath or shower. If you have a

hand-held shower, you can easily reach all parts of your body. You can aim the spray at your clitoris, labia, scrotum, penis or anus, or press the shower head against them. Adjust the water pressure and temperature to find out what feels good. If the spray feels too hard, unscrew the shower head to produce a wider, softer stream of water. A common technique is to lather up and then masturbate in the shower. You may find it arousing to take a shower in your underwear or other clothing.

Domestic objects that vibrate, such as an electric toothbrush, or soft fabrics, pillows, plastic

or metal objects with soft lines and no sharp edges can serve as masturbation toys. For instance, you can hold a pillow between your thighs, close to your genitals, and rub or thrust against it. Or running a feather over your skin may feel stimulating. You can use most things, but you shouldn't insert sharp objects or anything that might get stuck in your vagina or anus, since this could cause injury.

Different kinds of clothing can arouse desire and increase pleasure. You might find that particular styles, garments or fabrics turn you on. Some people enjoy – or even prefer if they are

very sensitive – fondling their clitoris or scrotum through their underwear. Some like to masturbate in close-fitting clothes such as jeans that cling to the genitals, while others prefer loose-fitting clothes such as sweat pants.

You can explore your body using a mirror, and some people increase their enjoyment by watching themselves masturbate in the mirror. Appealing to your various senses can be a good start to enhancing your pleasure, for instance by watching a movie or looking at a picture. Digital cameras make it easy to photograph or film yourself masturbating. Some people are

turned on by reading or writing, while others listen to music or record their own sounds. And others enjoy different scents and tastes. You can experience a variety of pleasurable sensations by breathing in different ways, slow or fast, and by holding your breath for brief periods and then blowing air over your body. Some people enjoy greasing themselves up with lubricant, oil, skin cream, or anything smooth, silky or sticky. You can taste and sniff your vaginal secretions, pre-ejaculate or sperm. Again, your home can be a source of inspiration. Take the contents of the fridge, for instance. Whipped cream, jam and yoghurt can

enhance the pleasure of masturbation. Carrots and cucumbers of various sizes can be used as dildos or anal plugs. Experiment with hot and cold sensations by using warm vanilla sauce and ice cream, by dripping warm candle wax onto your skin, or by rubbing yourself with an ice cube.

### Condoms and masturbation

For men, wearing a condom to masturbate works fine. The different condom shapes, colours and thicknesses can create different experiences. Slowly unrolling a condom may feel erotic and increase your arousal. To enhance

sensitivity you can apply lubricant both inside and outside the condom, or you can fill it with a thick liquid or body lotion. If you pull the condom over your scrotum as well, the resulting pressure can enhance your pleasure. You can fill a condom with warm water and hold it against your scrotum or labia. Women who masturbate with a dildo and use it in both their anus and their vagina should put a clean condom on it when they move it from the anus to the vagina. Usually you shouldn't use an oil-based lubricant such as cooking oil with a condom, because it may weaken the rubber. But since masturbation by definition is safe sex as

far as sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy are concerned, there is no need to worry about using oil in this case.

### Lie face down and explore the sofa

You can masturbate in practically any position: on your back, on your side, face down, lying, sitting, standing, legs together or wide apart, squatting or kneeling. Different positions provide different sensations. Some people find a particular position makes it easier for them to enjoy the experience and reach orgasm, especially if they have a disability. You can also vary your location and try masturbating in different places. Some people explore the sofa or an easy

chair, others try a rug, the kitchen table or a chair. If you're in a secluded spot outdoors, you might like to try the sensation of soft, cool grass, sun or water, warm sand or rocks.

## Orgasm

Most people tend to associate masturbation with orgasmic sensations. This doesn't mean that people always reach orgasm or ejaculate when they masturbate. For some this is important, for others less so. But the sensations can also vary depending on your mood and situation. The same form of masturbation can produce a different orgasmic experience on dif-

ferent occasions. Sometimes it's slight and gentle, sometimes strong and powerful. Sometimes you reach orgasm quickly, other times it takes longer – but the sensation is just as powerful. A pleasurable masturbation session doesn't have to culminate in orgasm. Perhaps you run out of time, or perhaps the urge passes. This might be because you didn't focus enough on your pleasure. You have to be sensitive to your body's signals, to sense how your body and your sex drive respond in various situations and to different kinds of touch. Sometimes, too, a man might ejaculate without experiencing orgasm. Sometimes you can enhance the experience

of orgasm by slowly intensifying your arousal level. Masturbate until a tingling sensation spreads throughout your body and then take a break. It can be hard to sense when your orgasm is about to happen, but you can improve your technique with practice so that you don't come sooner than you would like. If you take a break, you can resume masturbating a short time later, or wait several hours or longer to increase your sensitivity and achieve a more powerful orgasm. Some people may spend hours thinking about masturbation and fantasizing to increase their arousal. Your experience of masturbation and orgasm may also depend on

how engaged and self-aware you are, on your physical and mental perception of pleasure.

Masturbation doesn't have to stop with orgasm and ejaculation. Many people like to lie still and rest for a while, and some like to feel or taste their bodily fluids. Others continue touching themselves gently, exploring different areas of the body for any nuances of sensation and sensitivity.

When you masturbate, it's up to you.



RFSU has produced a range of sex toys called Trust in lust. Along with RFSU lubricants, these are available online at [rfsu.com](http://rfsu.com).

Further reading

**A Guide to Clitoral Sex,**  
Sandra Dahlén, RFSU, 2008

**Pussypedia,**  
Tina Nevin, RFSU, 2004

**Dicktionary,**  
Stefan Laack, RFSU, 2004

**The Hite Report on Female Sexuality,**  
Shere Hite, 1976

**The Hite Report on Men and Male Sexuality,**  
Shere Hite, 1981

RFSU's aim since it was founded in 1933 has been to give people the means to change their lives for the better. RFSU is a non-profit organisation independent of any political party or religion. We are dedicated to promoting a well-informed, open-minded attitude to sexuality and relationship issues. RFSU is founded on a firm belief that sexuality and relationships are central to the individual and to society. By informing and educating people and shaping opinion, RFSU aims to break down prejudices, overcome ignorance and improve sexual health in Sweden and abroad. RFSU views sexuality as a matter of individual liberty and human rights, in which all of us have the freedom to be ourselves, the freedom to choose and the freedom to enjoy. By buying our products, becoming a member, working with us or supporting RFSU's work, you can help us continue to change people's lives.

Interested in joining RFSU? E-mail [medlem@rfsu.se](mailto:medlem@rfsu.se).

