



SPECIAL REPORT

Spirited sex

Healthy sexuality connects us to energy, life and love. Discover how you can protect your reproductive system and ensure sexual satisfaction.

WORDS / CAROLINE ROBERTSON

Sex for procreation and pleasure is a primal drive that can elevate us to euphoric highs or drive us to depressing lows. With around 120 million couples having intercourse every day worldwide, it's worth wondering what attracts us to another.

A couple's chemistry is created by a cocktail of mental, physical and spiritual factors. It's not always lusty fire at first sight but sometimes a slow burn of alluring embers. Initial attraction between adults is influenced greatly by appearance, smell and sound of someone. At our base biochemistry, says sex therapist Dr Laura Berman, we're all "puppies on heat".

Men are generally less particular about their sexual partners with their billions of "seeds to sow". Studies show men are very drawn to an ovulating woman with a symmetrical smiling face, smooth skin, feminine hair, curves, a high voice and youthfulness. Women are choosier about who they share their limited 400 eggs with — though Cupid's arrow may bypass their brains for their hearts! In general, women favour men who are even-featured, tall, muscular and broad-shouldered, and with stubble, low voices and healthy bank accounts.

Most people also tend to be attracted to those with a similar social, economic, educational and religious background. Our natural pheromone perfume, along with taste, excites sexual arousal. Women are most attracted to men with a different major histocompatibility complex (MHC) from their own. MHC is related to the immune system and is detected by smell and taste. Kissing is a great litmus test to see whether our DNA wants to date and make healthy babies. "We unconsciously want to mate with someone who has a different immune system than ours because that

helps with the survival of our offspring," Berman says.

Depending on intentions, once a prospective partner passes the sensory audit, lusty advances may follow or compatibility on other levels may need confirmation. The green light of mutual attraction is flashed with signals such as eye contact, sweaty palms, smiling, mirroring of body language, leaning forward with open limbs, a lower voice for men and a higher one for women, touching and self-grooming. If you just want some rumpy pumpy, physical attraction may meet your needs, but beware: through sexual contact, others' negative energy can infiltrate you and have a malignant effect. Boundaries blur and euphoric endorphins become boss.

If you want an enduring encounter, proceed with caution before handing your brain in at the bed. Does your prospective mate possess the attributes you consider essential? Do they have fatal flaws such as addictions, abusiveness, sexual dysfunction, fear of commitment, dishonesty, untrustworthiness or a tendency to control? This takes

time to tell, so you may like to check compatibility before commitment or copulation. Go with your gut above all. If you feel comfortable and better when with this person, that's encouraging.

If you're drawn to the same troubled types and repeat traumatic relationships, take responsibility and ask yourself whether you really want to perpetuate the pain or enjoy a joyful love life. Assess why past pairings didn't work. Were you too clingy, trusting, uncaring, demanding, impatient, idealistic? What past wounds were you replaying; what childhood patterns from your parents? Did you lose your identity or self-love?

Self-love is the soil that soulmate love takes root in. If you believe you're lovable, you let love in. If you feel unlovable, your partners reflect that. As Anaïs Nin wrote, "The enemy of a love is never outside; it's what we lack in ourselves." Feel complete in yourself; then you'll attract the compatible companion you deserve.

POSITIVE SEXUALITY

What does the word "sex" evoke in you? Excitement, pleasure, secrecy, shame, stress, sadness, guilt? Your sexual perspective is filtered through conditioning from cultural, religious and familial input. Society has an ambivalent approach to sexuality, encouraging it yet also judging and sensationalising it.

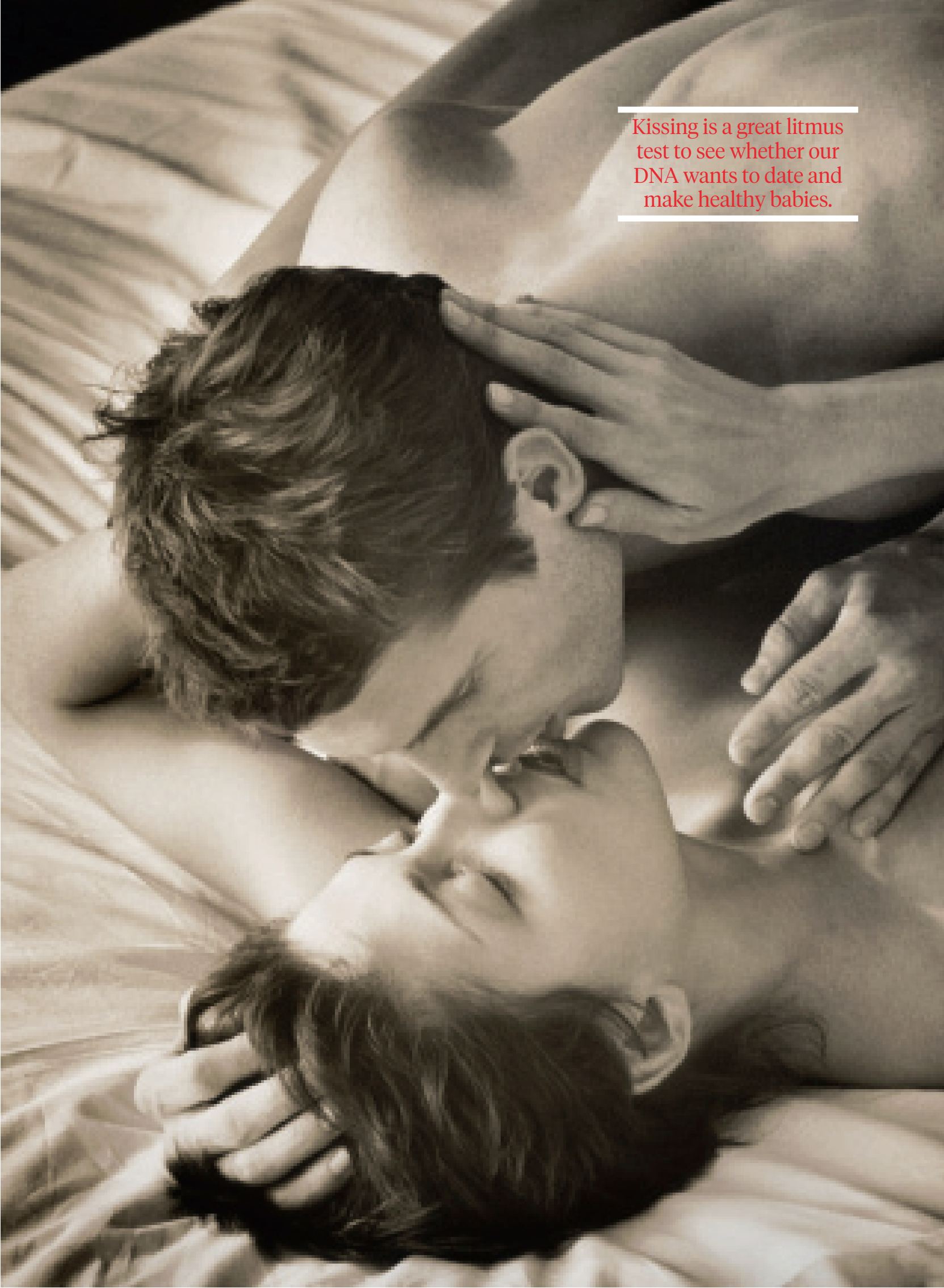
Increased quantity of sex with decreased quality has left many suffering shallow, dissatisfying sex. Some are sexually wounded after degrading, disappointing, humiliating, exploitative, shameful or unstimulating experiences. These scars may manifest as inhibition, frigidity, impotence, promiscuity or even perversions. Destructive, loveless sex rules the dark side of sexuality.

The worrying incidence of rape, sadism, masochism, pedophilia and

TO MAKE LOVE ... OR NOT

If you want long-term loving, see if you can say YES to the following before having sex:

- 1** Do I feel more pleasure than pain from this relationship?
- 2** Would I want to be with this person if they never changed or became physically impaired?
- 3** Will my life be more fulfilling with this person?
- 4** Can we meet each other's expectations regarding children, career, house duties, finances, lifestyle and fidelity?



Kissing is a great litmus test to see whether our DNA wants to date and make healthy babies.



incest reflects the dangerous influence of loveless sex. Unloving sex is not just available but socially acceptable, with pornography, brothels and promiscuity leading us from intimacy towards impersonal sex. Sex is often used as a tool of domination and ego by men, while women may use it to manipulate others or as a love substitute.

For a healthy sex life, examine your beliefs and boundaries. A sex therapist can help you uncover these attitudes. Do you see sex as divine or depraved, a source of damnation or salvation, for duty or desire, disappointing or delicious? Can you savour your sexuality or is it shameful? Whether you feel sex degrades you or elevates you determines whether it harms or helps you. How can you move from a dissatisfying approach to sex to a more fulfilling experience?

Love is the answer. Love yourself, love your body, love your partner, connect deeply and don't be afraid to express your desires. When we make love to expand our hearts, our every action, every sound, every caress expresses our loving feelings, making it a euphoric experience. Making love we become love and feel reborn.

Embrace your sexual self by exploring how it works, looks and feels. Sex therapist and author Jacqueline Hellyer suggests women venerate their vaginas by naming them, pleasuring them, conditioning them with kegel exercises, resting them when needed and, above all, understanding they're the incredible gateway for human life.

Become "cliterate" by understanding the scope of female sexuality. For example, did you know women have as much engorged erectile tissue as men? The clitoral head is only the tip of the iceberg with 75 per cent of it inside as the pulsing clitoral shaft, urethral sponge, vestibular or clitoral bulbs and crura or clitoral legs.

If religion has repressed your sexual expression, gain a fresh perspective from ancient cultures that revered sex as sacred. Tantra and Taoism see sexuality as a prayer to our highest selves. Osho called sex one of the rungs on the ladder to liberation, a rite that can raise our consciousness to feel connected with all. Union between couples mirrors divine creation, with sexual symbolism permeating every civilisation, seen even in ancient cave drawings. Phallic



Devotional representations of divine intercourse abound: the Ankh symbol of ancient Egypt, yoni lingams of Asia, Tantric temple sculptures in Khajuraho, for example.

symbols exalt sexuality in traditional art, from the American Indians' totem poles to India's Shiva lingams to England's well-endowed giant of Cerne Abbas.

Sacred objects and rituals also worship the female form; witness the yoni of India and the clamshell parade in the city of Inuyama, Japan. Devotional representations of divine intercourse abound: the Ankh symbol of ancient Egypt, yoni lingams of Asia, Tantric temple sculptures in Khajuraho, India, for example. At Japan's Chiba festival, a giant wooden phallus is inserted into a straw vulva, showering the audience with milky sake! Celebrate your own sexuality as a divine gift and it will start to take on more spiritual significance.

Periods of celibacy or experimentation are normal phases of life. Ayurveda advises sexual abstinence until the 20s so one can channel sexual energy into pursuits of mental and physical development. Ayurveda also deems one emotionally too immature to deal with the psychological implications and responsibilities of a sexual relationship, and research shows sexual stimulation promotes testosterone production, which can increase hostility and agitation. Celibacy can be a healthy aid

to enlightenment if the energy is rechannelled correctly.

Suppressed sexual energy, however, wages an inner war that surfaces in destructive ways, such as aggression, depression, perversion, neurosis and psychosis. Balanced celibacy promotes peace, not frustration, argues philosopher Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov: "Only idiotic puritans fight against this energy, and they are always hurled to the ground and crushed by it, because they are fighting against a divine principle."

When we treasure sex as an enlightening experience it's more a meditation than a compulsion. Experienced with pure intentions, sexuality starts to manifest more spiritual energy. Uniting with your lover can connect you with the universe. Many people feel greater transcendence in their bedrooms than in their churches. As actor Omar Sharif said, "Making love? It's a communion with a woman. The bed is the holy table. There I find passion — and purification."

ORGAN TUNING

Healthy sexual organs give us greater pleasure and better

chances of conception. Protect yourself from possible STIs by using condoms until your partner is tested three months after their last partner: this is the time it takes for many conditions, such as HIV, to show. Remember that even virgins can have infections from oral or intravenous contagion. Try these natural methods to overcome common conditions.

Thrush

This irritating, itching condition is caused by the *Candida albicans* fungus. Though both men and women may have it on the tongue, intestinal tract, anus and genitals, women suffer symptoms more intensely. It can cause farting, fatigue, redness, a sour discharge, rash, swelling and burning. Thrush overgrowth often arises due to poor nutrition, antibiotics, alcohol, vaginal deodorisers or diarrhoea, or from an infected source.

Three steps can stamp out thrush: starve it, kill it and replace it. As with an unwanted guest, when you stop feeding thrush it goes away. Foods to withdraw from include anything fermented, alcohol, sugar, fruit, mushrooms, cheese, yeast, malt and caffeine. Xylitol is a natural sweetener that has been shown to vanquish thrush. Take plenty of warm water, wholegrains and

Photography Getty Images



vegetables with cooking herbs such as thyme, turmeric, sage, oregano and garlic to flush out the fungal foe.

Internal antifungals such as neem, myrrh, triphala, pao d'arco and horopito help to kill thrush. Externally, neem or calendula ointment can ease the itch. Internally, you can use boric acid pessaries or insert an unbleached tampon dipped in half a cup of pure yoghurt mixed with five drops of tea-tree oil for an hour once a day until clear. If pregnant, instead of using a tampon, flush the area with one cup of water mixed with one teaspoon of acidophilus powder and three drops of tea-tree oil.

To support the return of healthy flora, take *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *L. rhamnosus* or *L. plantarum* powder. Go commando to reduce damp heat downunder. Wipe front and back separately after evacuating, use a mild tea-tree wash on the area and apply water-based lubricants only. Before sex, get your partner to gargle with Nilstat and wash their genitals with a tea-tree foam or use a condom.

Vaginismus

When the vaginal "venus flytrap" clamps shut, it's known as vaginismus. This involuntary muscle contraction prevents penetration or makes it painful. Muscles involved may include the pubococcygeus (PC), levator ani, bulbospongiosus, circumvaginal and perivaginal muscles.

Primary vaginismus is when a woman has never been able to have pain-free intercourse and is unable to insert anything without cramping around it. Secondary vaginismus is when a woman who previously enjoyed intercourse suddenly suffers the symptoms. The condition may be caused by a combination of factors including physical abuse, childbirth, painful intercourse caused by things such as endometriosis,

Sex is inseparable from our mind-body beings. Our sexual expression reflects our attitudes, energy, relationships, work, environment — everything.

religious conditioning, body issues, anxiety, stress, mistrusting a partner, sexual identity confusion and infections such as vulvar vestibulitis syndrome.

According to Ward and Ogden's vaginismus study, the three most common causes of vaginismus are fear of painful sex, the belief that sex is wrong and traumatic early childhood experiences, with sufferers being twice as likely to have a history of childhood sexual abuse.

Sydney sex therapist Matty Silver has helped clients overcome this condition with counselling, education, anxiety reduction, pelvic floor exercises and retraining of the pelvic floor muscles. She maintains, "The treatment of vaginismus involves unlearning the fear-contraction reflex and learning to keep the pelvic floor muscles relaxed during intercourse. Successful treatment does not require drugs, surgery or any complex invasive techniques."

Botox around the vaginal muscles is a new treatment showing promising results; however, the symptoms often return once the Botox wears out. Progressively larger vaginal dilators have been successful in some cases. One can try this at home with gentle treatment. Clip your fingernails and wash your hands. Relax with a massage and bath. Apply a lubricant such as

coconut oil using your pinky finger. Slowly swirl around your labia, edging in closer before inserting then contracting and relaxing your PC muscle around the finger, as if holding in and releasing urine. Next, use two fingers, progressing at your pace to three fingers and eventually a dildo. During intercourse, being on top is the best position to control the angle and rate of penetration; then, once relaxed, try other positions.

A willing willy

The popularity of the drug Viagra is an indication of how common the problem of erectile dysfunction (ED) is. As many as 18 per cent of men in the US have ED, with a higher rate in men 40 years and older. Erectile dysfunction is the inability to achieve or maintain an erection for penetration. It's normal to become a little limp when tired, drunk, unaroused, sick or on certain medications. But when the problem persists, addressing the cause can bring back a man's mojo. Psychological problems contributing to ED include performance anxiety, stress, relationship strain and sexual abuse.

Increasing angst around ED can feed the cycle, according to Matty Silver. "They may start avoiding sex or become so traumatised they stop having sex altogether. To break the cycle, they first need to admit there is a problem." With a supportive sex therapist and partner, they can help their pleasure to flow again. Jacqueline Hellyer advises, "To reach your sexual potential you have to learn to move into the right side of your brain. Ditch the myths that plague you, learn to stay present in your body, feel safe and connected with your partner and surrender to the experience without worry or fear."

Blood flow into the penis is what makes it hard, so anything that impedes circulation can cause ED. This includes diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, smoking and obesity. Low testosterone is also a culprit and can be diagnosed by a blood test, then easily treated. Physicians often prescribe drugs such as Viagra and Cialis, which have temporary success. Vacuum penis pumps à la Austin Powers may give moderate improvement. To maintain an erection, a rubber ring can be placed at the base, but this can create pain and numbness.

Eastern medicine teaches the importance of elevating energy to "raise the cobra". Sexual tonics called *vajikaranas* in Ayurveda include tribulus, ashwagandha, kapi kachu, urad dal and garlic. Chinese medicine has a range of abominable animal-derived aphrodisiacs

that have involved the torture and murder of many animals. However, the herbal ones such as ginseng, horny goatweed and fo-ti are helpful. Damiana, maca and yohimbe are other well-known erectile remedies that also boost energy. Enough rest, good nutrition, emotional connection, sensual foreplay, sexual teasing and moderate exercise also give men sexual energy.

"Strengthening the PC muscle is one of the greatest secrets a man can know," says Kerry Riley, author of *Sexual Secrets for Men* and director of The Australian School of Tantra. This can increase a man's erectile power and orgasms while preventing premature ejaculation. In *Cultivating Male Sexual Energy*, Taoist master Mantak Chia advocates the Deer Exercise, along with many other valuable practices. This stimulates circulation, pumps the prostate and increases semen production.

Lying, sitting or standing, cup your scrotum with your right hand, then with your left hand two inches below the belly button, massage in clockwise circles 81 times. Tighten your anal muscles as if sucking up air, holding for as long as possible, then stopping and relaxing. Then repeat. Concentrate on what you're doing, feeling the warmth grow. After a time, you'll feel a tingling up your spine and "fire stoking your loins".

Lasting longer

"My sex life is like a rollercoaster ride. Lots of waiting, then it's all over in 30 seconds," joked my patient with premature ejaculation (PE). But beneath the humour lay deep despair that he couldn't enjoy prolonged intimacy with his partner, and fear she'd leave him because of frustration. This acquired or lifelong plight affects one in three men, with most suffering in embarrassed silence. Acquired premature ejaculation is when men who've previously had normal sexual function are unable to last longer than three minutes, while lifelong premature ejaculation is when sex lasts for a minute at most.

PE is far from a recent phenomenon. The 1948 Kinsey Report found 80 per cent of men ejaculated within two minutes of penetration, whereas women take about 20 minutes to orgasm. The Hite Report of the 1970s, surveying over 7000 US men, reported 21 per cent of men ejaculated within 60 seconds of vaginal penetration and 62 per cent ejaculated in 1-5 minutes.

But why are some men quick-draws while others can hold their arousal over hours? Modern psychology poses that some men are conditioned to come quickly since secretive teenage times. It may also be associated with anxiety, prostatitis, urethritis, hyperthyroidism, erectile dysfunction and neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis. Drugs associated with PE include amphetamines, cocaine and dopaminergic medication.

Though a quickie can be satisfying sometimes, savouring sustained sex builds deeper bliss, according to Eastern sciences. Mantak Chia likens women to water, taking time to heat up, while men are fires that can quickly combust. Premature ejaculation leaves the woman cold and the man depleted. Author of *The Tao of Loving*, Jolan Chang, agrees. "When a man has ejaculated, it is like letting the air out of a balloon — he feels flat."

Ejaculation control is key to a stronger connection and climax. Also, using special techniques, one can retrain the downward and outward explosive ejaculation to become an imploding inward and upward intrajaculation. Not easy to say or do! But as Mantak Chia explains, "Real sexual fulfilment lies not in feeling the life going out of you but in increasing the awareness of the vital current that flows through the loins."

This conserved force that would normally form new life is then channelled within to renew the whole body. Areas that benefit are said to be the nerves, endocrine glands, bone

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marrow, brain and immune system. Tantric scholar Sir John Woodruff writes in *The Serpent Power*, "The force of the sexual centres if directed upwards extraordinarily heightens all mental and physical functioning."

Even when a man does ejaculate he can hold some of it in so the "superfood" is reabsorbed into his body. Science agrees semen is a treasure house of vitamins, minerals, trace elements, hormones, proteins, iron, enzymes and other vital nutritional substances including calcium, albumin, lecithin, phosphorus and nucleoproteins. Interestingly, there are similarities to brain and nerve tissue, areas which Plato, Pythagoras and Eastern rishis believed were nourished by retained semen. They also held that a weak nervous system and depleted energy and brain function were connected to "excessive seed loss".

By working with the sexual muscles, breath and visualisation, ejaculation mastery can be attained. Ultimately, overcoming PE will be to your advantage as you learn to pleasure your partner first and build an enormous charge far superior to a one-minute explosion. Try these tips to last longer:

- Practise Taoist sexual methods of maintaining an erection and ejaculation control. This fun homework includes self-pleasuring while contracting the pubococcygeal muscle, pressing on the perineum, pulling down the testes, pinching the frenulum and, most importantly, using breathing and visualisation practices to circulate the accumulated energy around the body's central energy channel. It takes dedication, but most men see results by three months, enjoying the ecstasy of coming together with their partners rather than just coming. (For directions, see *Prevent Premature Ejaculation*.)
- Ask your partner not to touch your genitals and go slowly until you've pleased her to orgasm orally, then with penetration. As Jacqueline Hellyer says, "What men love best about sex is their partners' pleasure. The more pleasure she has, the more pleasure he has."
- Having her on top is also less stimulating for men, delaying ejaculation while arousing the woman.
- Dismiss early ejaculation, continue to enjoy sensual interaction and build your arousal again. Most men last longer the second time.
- Have sex or masturbate more often, as the longer you abstain the harder it is to contain the energy.



- Use a normal or desensitising condom, the only downside being it can reduce erection and pleasure. Numbing agents also rule out fellatio and may cause allergic reactions.
- Severance Secret (SS) cream contains nine natural substances that have shown efficacy in controlled studies. It's only available in Asia and can cause burning in rare cases.
- As a last resort, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) antidepressants are showing promising results but must be taken daily for 12 weeks before maximal effect is achieved. The positive impact seems to wane after six months.

SATISFYING SEX

"When we expand our thinking and beliefs, our love flows freely. When we contract, we shut ourselves off." ~ Louise L Hay

PREVENT PREMATURE EJACULATION

With the aim to conserve and circulate energy through your body, you can use the following technique to prevent ejaculation.

At the point of peak arousal, inhale deeply, place the tip of your tongue on the root of your mouth and tighten the PC muscle. Press firmly on a soft indent in the perineum located between the scrotum and anus. Exhale, relaxing the anal and genital muscles. If the urge to ejaculate continues, squeeze the frenulum (behind the glans penis) with thumb and forefinger until it subsides. Imagine drawing your sexual energy from your genitals to your heart, stroking from your genitals to your heart. Visualise a warm pink glow flowing from your pelvis up to your heart.

You can experience an internal blissful orgasm through this process, which energises rather than depletes. For details, see *The Multi Orgasmic Man* by Mantak Chia and Douglas Abrams Arava.

If your sex life was spectacular, what would it look and feel like? What's blocking you from attaining this? Open your perception to greater possibilities and sexual satisfaction will skyrocket. Sexuality shifts through all different stages: suppression, stagnation, exploration and expression. When we understand these transitions we ride the wave of sexuality with calm acceptance.

Sex is inseparable from our mind-body beings. Our sexual expression reflects our attitudes, energy, relationships, work, environment — everything. When our love tanks are full, joy overflows to all areas of life. Healthy sex is just one way we can express our tenderness and expand our hearts. The power of satisfying sex can keep couples connected, increase energy, boost immunity, relieve depression, reduce pain, dissolve stress and bring about epiphanies.

If we give sexuality the time and attention it needs to blossom, we reap fulfilling benefits that feed our health and happiness. Let's uproot weed-beliefs that strangle sexual satisfaction and let love flourish.

"I'm too busy, tired or sick for sex."

Taking time for a little nookie can increase your energy and health. As the author of *Sex Secrets for Busy People*, Jacqueline Hellyer, says, "If you're feeling depleted, have sex and liberate your energy. Make the space and time in your life to make sex happen. It's all about integrating sex in your life so that sex complements and enhances the rest of your life." Many people report the miraculous pain-killing effects of sex. Numerous studies show sex can increase immunity and improve mood. And solo sex is just as powerful, with masturbation more effective than medication for some.

A "shagadelic" state releases hormones such as testosterone and progesterone, which relieve PMT, elevates mood to orgasmic heights, increases immune-boosting

immunoglobulin A and gives a healthy glow that healing Tao expert Maneewan Chia calls her "best beauty aid".

Sex doesn't have to be an aerobic workout to satisfy. The slow, sensual full-body experience can be even more nourishing than a wham-bam bonk. Tender touch bonds couples and eases issues, as sex therapist Dr Sandra Scantling explains: "Sexual closeness is the body's emotional fuel." According to sexologist Dr Rudolf von Urban in *Sex, Perfection and Marital Happiness*, just lying together touching, naked and still for 30 minutes has been shown to improve relationships, insomnia, high blood pressure, irritability, ulcers and other health problems.

This sexual bonding creates a resonance effect called "entrainment" that brings about deep healing for both partners. In their healing love workshops, Diane and Kerry Riley teach the Daily Devotion practice whereby couples lie still with genitals, lips and limbs connected for at least five minutes morning and evening. The participants' response was that it helped them to heal daily disharmony, energise, relax and improve their moods.

Some therapists have found that union with a loving partner or oneself in the right circumstances can heal frigidity, quell anxiety, release trauma from touch deprivation or abuse and overcome feelings of negative self-esteem, timidity and alienation. The emotional benefits of sexuality were evident in one study that found men who masturbated regularly were less prone to bouts of depression.

Sexual dissatisfaction was also prevalent in a high percentage of patients before a heart attack, according to research by Dr Paul Pearsall. Jacqueline Hellyer says, "Having sex can often be like getting to the gym — you know it's good for you, you know you'll feel better for doing it, but ... it's still hard to get there in the first place!" So next time, think, "I'm too busy, tired or sick NOT to have sex," because it might shift your state to a more pleasurable paradigm.

"My partner can't pleasure me."

Most couples enjoy a passionate honeymoon phase. As our lusty fires temper over time, true sexual patterns emerge. Sexual discontent may arise for many reasons, including mismatched libidos, boredom, body image issues, negative emotions, poor sexual skills, stress, depression, disease and medications. Many relationships break up because they don't address these issues early. Matty Silver says, "My advice is start fixing the issues before it's too late."

Are you worth fighting for? First, be responsible for your own erotic energy. Optimising vitality through good nutrition, adequate sleep and exercise will build reserve energy for sex. Not only does exercise increase self-esteem, but a study of 78 sedentary men at California University in the US found that a nine-month exercise regime increased libido, frequency of sex by 30 per cent and orgasm by 36 per cent. Pelvic floor exercises as taught in Pilates will also heighten enjoyment and increase stamina for both partners.

If you're one of the many women who can't orgasm, learn what arouses you via self-service. Author of *Women's Anatomy of Arousal* Sheri Winston says, "Solo sex is your rehearsal hall, your learning laboratory and your practice space. It's your self-serve bar and your self-love spa. If you don't love yourself well, in all aspects including sexually, it's hard to be a great partner and lover to others." She advises, "Enhance your breathing and you'll augment your arousal and your climax will be bigger and better. Say 'yes' to pleasure, 'yes' to getting wilder, 'YES' to going further than you thought you could."

If you take a while to get hot compared to your lover, you may like to start solo before the duet. Bear in mind that only



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about 25 per cent of women can orgasm through penetration alone, so ask your partner to expand their repertoire. Says sex therapist and relationship coach Cyndi Darnell, “[We’re] fed that intercourse is the main course, but it’s potentially the least satisfying aspect.”

Communication is lubrication, so share your likes and dislikes with your partner — they’re not a mind reader. “The bedroom is for expression, not suppression. Surrender to pleasure and expand your sexual smorgasbord,” encourages Hellyer. “Explore varied positions, places, props, clothes, sensory arousal and deprivation, erotic massage, fetishes, restraint, role plays, erotic talk and stories, taking photos, movies, erotic shows, film, threesomes ...” Build the sexual charge by sexting with the Snapchat app, which deletes messages in seconds. Learn massage, enjoy a tantric getaway or take online classes such as Sheri Winston’s e-lessons for erotic empowerment (intimateartscenter.com/shop/downloadwebinars).

If you’re the initiator of sex, try to be more understanding. If you’re the distancer, try to be more affectionate. “It’s important to stop blaming each other; both of you are missing out on a good sex life,” says Matty Silver. “When you forgive each other for past hurts and misunderstandings, you can start to improve your situation, but you have to change your attitudes and behaviours and work to re-establish intimacy.”

Sheri Winston says desire grows with intimacy. “Something simple to increase your libido is to have more sex. Take time to engage in the behaviors you naturally did when you first fell in love: eye gazing, interested attention, lots of touching, deep, wet kisses. One option when one partner is feeling randy and the other isn’t is for the uninterested partner to lovingly hold and encourage the desirous one while they self-pleasure.”

No matter how technically good a lover is, without heart, sex will soon feel empty. The measure of a successful sexual experience is not the number of orgasms achieved but the degree to which one’s heart and awareness expand to love more. Tantric teacher Kerry Riley feels that “during lovemaking the challenge for men is how much deep intimacy and love they can feel”. Rather than think of sex as a stop/start event, see it as an ongoing process of loving interaction with oneself and the other.



“Young women often aren’t relaxed enough to have an orgasm. Older women know what they like and will tell you.”

“Old people aren’t sexual.”

Sexual desire needn’t diminish with age, according to a survey of over 3000 US adults aged 57 to 85, which revealed up to 75 per cent of those questioned remain sexually active. Stacy Tessler Lindau of Chicago University, who led the study, remarked, “Individuals who remain sexually active gain the benefit of the physical exercise that comes with sex. It’s also possible the endorphins released by orgasms give a general sense of wellbeing. The psychological benefits of being loved and cared for also trickle over to physical health.”

Ageing does change the body, though, as Matty Silver explains. “Women start to experience menopausal changes such as vaginal dryness,” she says. “The vaginal lining thins and sometimes intercourse becomes uncomfortable. Libido and sexual self-esteem may decrease, and for both men and women it often takes longer to have an orgasm. Men

I’LL HAVE WHAT SHE’S HAVING

A simple way to absorb your partner’s energy is with muscle contraction, breath and visualisation.

With tongues and genitals connected, on inhalation contract your PC muscle and visualise energy flowing up your genitals, spine, head, tongue to tummy. Then, breathing out through the mouth, feel the energy spread through your entire being. Remain relaxed and hold the energy within, resisting orgasm until the charge has accumulated to an overflowing level.

may experience erectile problems and arousal can take more time.” These issues can be overcome with options such as bio-identical HRT, phyto-oestrogens like soy, lubricants, ginseng, Viagra and therapies for erectile dysfunction. Men can remain virile for life, as exemplified by Pablo Picasso, who fathered a child in his nineties.

Some say sex gets better after menopause. The kids have left home, work stress has passed and there’s confidence in giving and receiving pleasure without fear of pregnancy. Love psychologist Helen Fisher agrees. “Young women often aren’t relaxed enough to have an orgasm. Older women know what they like and will tell you.” Also at menopause, Fisher says, “levels of oestrogen recede, unmasking the power of testosterone. This allows women to be more assertive and demanding, and many become more interested in sex.”

Studies have shown that physical capacity for male erection and male and female orgasms continues almost indefinitely. Research has also uncovered that senior sexual practices are varied, including masturbation and oral sex, with satisfaction often increasing rather than decreasing with age.

Jacqueline Hellyer sees seniors in her sex therapy practice and recalls one man likening the path to passion to a Kilimanjaro walk. “There’s normally a lot of ‘undoing’ to be done to move forward sexually,” she says. “They have to overcome the years of complacency, misunderstandings, unvoiced expectations and swallowed hurts, to be able to come to a place of commonality from where they can stand firm together, hand in hand, looking in the same direction. Then the intimacy, eroticism and true desire can begin.”

Enjoy the climb and the view from the peak! 🍷

WITH THANKS

- **Mantak Chia**, universal- tao.com
- **Cyndi Darnell**, cyndidarnell.com
- **Jacqueline Hellyer**, jacquelinehellyer.com
- **Diane and Kerry Riley**, australianschooloftantra.com.au
- **Matty Silver**, mattysilver.com.au
- **Sheri Winston**, intimateartscenter.com

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