



## Dear Sex Counselor,

I've heard that masturbation is good for you. Do you have suggestions of things I might try?

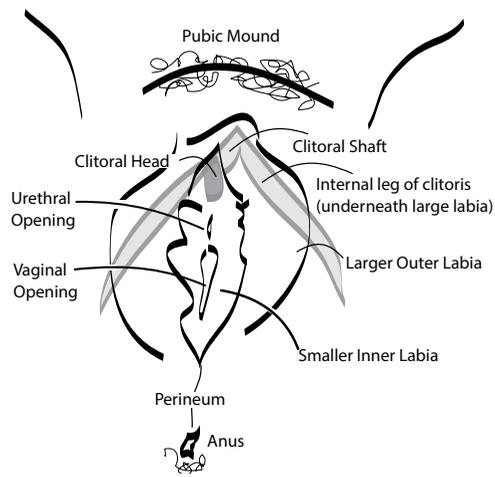
Self pleasure, also known as masturbation, specifically refers to touching yourself sexually in a way that feels good. There is no one right way to masturbate, and as long as it doesn't hurt, there's certainly no wrong way. Masturbating for your own pleasure, on your own terms, is a way to deepen your relationship with the most important person in your life—you!

### Why masturbate?

Besides feeling good, masturbation can strengthen your pelvic muscles, revitalize body tissues, fight insomnia, reduce depression, lessen period-related (menstrual) discomfort, and release emotional tension and stress. Masturbation is 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. Masturbation is also a way to meet your own sexual needs if your partner is tired, ill, or on a different sexual rhythm. Masturbation is normal, healthy, and good for your body and your mind.

### On your mark...

Begin by taking a tour of your vulva:



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

### Get set...

Here are some suggestions to consider when you're preparing to pleasure yourself:

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 aroused you will become. While some enjoy "quickie" sessions, others like to take an hour (or a few) to cultivate different sensations. Enjoy your discoveries, and take a break at any point you choose. If you're seeking an orgasm, 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 women 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 like to select a certain kind of music, light candles, aromatherapy or incense.

Add lubricant. Keeping things slippery reduces friction, intensifies sensation and moisturizes tissues. There are many types of lube, and each feels different to your hand and body. Get little sample packs and give 'em a road test! You can always use saliva, too. Oils aren't good for your vulva and vagina; they can clog pores, throw off pH and induce an infection. Stick with a water-based or silicone-based lubricant for your safety and pleasure.

Maybe a toy? Some women like things that vibrate or pulsate because these can provide sensations more consistently than a hand. Vibrators are toys specifically designed for sexual play; they come in many different shapes, sizes, colors, and textures. They can be used externally or internally, and come 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. 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. Of course, you can also just 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; it's up to you. 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. Choose whatever you find sexually exciting, and let your hands roam around your body. If you don't want to fantasize, 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.

### Some things to try:

- 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 labia and along the clitoral legs.
- 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 more fingers to make short, pushing strokes against the side of the clitoral shaft.

-Try speeding up, slowing down, switching hands. Tickle, tap, press and rub.

-Gently pull the lips and clitoral shaft between fingers and thumb. You could also try a rolling motion. Try faster, slower, more pressure, less pressure.

-Use four fingertips (without the thumb) or the palm of your hand on your whole vulva. You can press and release, rub in circles, or 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. Try pressing or making circles around the opening; try touching softly or firmly.

-Add a lubricant of your choice, and try directly tapping or stroking the clitoris or the clitoral shaft. Some women like soft touches, some like firm. You can also use two hands—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.

-While you touch your clitoris with one hand, use your other hand to explore your nipples, vaginal opening, thighs, or anal opening.

-Experiment with pressure by squeezing your legs together or squeezing a blanket, pillow, or even a balled up pair of socks between your thighs and against your vulva. Some women like to ride the edges of bathtubs or furniture; this adds pressure while still allowing complete hip movement.

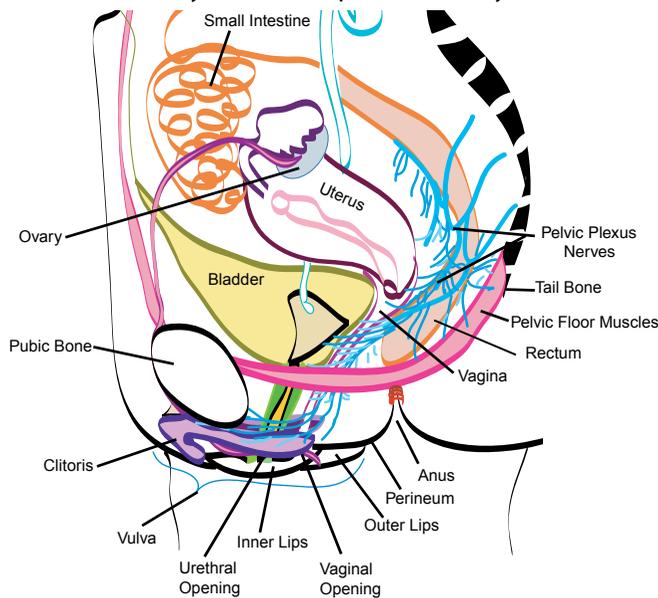
-Look around your house for sources of vibration and stimulation. Press against the washing machine on the spin cycle, a back or foot massager, an electric toothbrush (you'll need a clean, new one for sex play) or a vibrating phone. Running water can also be a great toy. Try a hand-held shower head, 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

women find that thrusting, wiggling, gyrating, and moaning or sighing can intensify the sensations of arousal, or be arousing all on their own.

-Some women enjoy a feeling of vaginal fullness, or internal motion or thrusting. If you like, 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 women like pressure on the front wall of the vagina towards the belly button, either just a couple inches inside or more deeply. These areas are where the pelvic plexus nerves are located, and some find this kind of stimulation quite pleasurable.

-Take a tour of your internal pelvic anatomy:



### Now What?

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, described by some as being like reaching 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 is different for everyone, but many describe it as an intense sensation of release and pleasure, along with a series of muscle spasms and throbbing sensations deep inside the pelvis, caused

primarily 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 woman to reach orgasm, so if it seems to take a long time for you, that's 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 out 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. And of course, there's no reason you have to reach orgasm. Remember, pleasure is the goal. If what you're doing is pleasurable, by all means, continue for as long as you like. If you want to stop, that's fine, too.

If you are a woman 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 hanging to a less direct or intense kind of touching or 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; the more the merrier. 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 brochure.

### Common Questions & Answers

**Will masturbation 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 women find that they can have an orgasm (even their first orgasm) more easily or quickly when they are masturbating, and orgasm does get easier with practice. You're certainly 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, and what could be sexier?

However, there is one potential pitfall worth mentioning: it is possible to train yourself to be able to achieve orgasm only with one specific type of stimulation, so vary your technique every now and then to avoid getting into a rut. Especially avoid always using a technique that partner sex can't possibly duplicate. For example, if you always masturbate 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 masturbation cause health problems?**

No. There are no health risks associated with masturbation. If you are doing something that doesn't feel good, either mentally or physically, it's time to try something different.

**Further resources:**

[www.sexualityresources.com](http://www.sexualityresources.com)

On our website, you can browse our online store, download all our brochures at no charge, and read informational articles about sex and sexuality.

**Getting Off: A Woman's Guide to Masturbation** by Jayme Waxman

Still have questions about masturbation? This entire book is dedicated to information about and techniques for masturbation for women.

# Masturbation for Women

~Learn how to masturbate

~Improve your sexual connection with yourself

~Become orgasmic, if you choose

~Add positive energy to the world



*A Woman's Touch*  
Sexuality Resource Center

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