



Just the Facts: The Female Orgasm

By Debby Herbenick, PhD, MPH

Many women have questions about female orgasm what it feels like, whether there's really a difference between g-spot and clitoral orgasms, how to have an orgasm, or how to have multiple orgasms.

If a woman has never had an orgasm, she is not alone many women of all ages have never had an orgasm. And indeed, most women are capable of having an orgasm.

Women experience sexual pleasure and orgasm in a variety of different ways vaginal intercourse, receiving oral sex, self masturbation, masturbation by a partner, breast stimulation, anal play or sexual fantasy. Women may find that orgasms feel different from time to time, and that sometimes they are easy to achieve and other times it is more difficult.

Most women, like most men, have their first orgasm alone during self-masturbation (also sometimes called "self-pleasuring"). Being alone can take the pressure off of trying to please one's partner or worrying about how one looks (we all make funny faces thanks to muscle tightening leading up to orgasm) or how long it is taking. Most women feel like they take a long time to have an orgasm, particularly if they are new to having orgasms. It can take 10, 20, 30 or 60 minutes (or longer) to have an orgasm. Taking some time is perfectly normal and, with patience and practice, it will most likely become easier for a woman to have an orgasm.

Some sex educators and therapists recommend that women focus on sexual pleasure and enjoyment, rather than making orgasm their "goal" (the stress of making it a goal can actually make it more difficult to have an orgasm).

It is also often suggested that women take time getting to know their body by spending time alone, naked, in front of a mirror and looking at their entire bodies breasts, stomach, thighs, arms, genitals with appreciation and admiration. Becoming more comfortable with one's own body can make it easier to experience sexual pleasure and even orgasm.

Bedroom toys, such as vibrators, can make it easier for many women to experience sexual pleasure and orgasm and they have been recommended for decades by sex educators and therapists. Women can use bedroom toys alone during self masturbation or during sexual activity with a partner.



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Learning about the female body and how it works can also make it easier for a woman to experience sexual pleasure and orgasm. For example, it can be helpful for women to learn that many women require direct stimulation of the nerve-packed clitoris to have an orgasm, and that not all women orgasm through vaginal intercourse.

Because orgasm is such a complex process and often takes women some time to understand and develop enough comfort to relax, learn about their bodies and try to experience one in a less goal-directed way it can be helpful to recommend a few books to women who attend your parties. These books are often used by sex educators and therapists when working with their clients. They include:

For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality by Dr. Lonnie Barbach (Signet, 2000)

Becoming Orgasmic by Dr. Julia Heiman (Fireside, 1987)

Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving by Dr. Betty Dodson (Three Rivers Press, 1996) □

The Big Book of Masturbation by Martha Cornog (Down There Press, 2003)

The Good Vibrations Guide to Sex by Cathy Winks and Anne Semans (Cleis Press, 2002)



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