Masturbation
Masturbation, or self-pleasuring, is touching and rubbing parts of your body for sexual pleasure, such as the penis, clitoris, vulva and breasts. It is a normal and healthy way for people to explore their own bodies and find out what feels good, where and how they like to be touched and how to achieve an orgasm.

Some people think that only people without partners masturbate, but most people with regular partners still masturbate throughout their adult life. Masturbation can also happen between two people (mutual masturbation), which can be a very intimate experience.

Masturbation is a normal behaviour that is seen at all ages, from childhood, through the teen years and into adulthood. Even though it is normal, some people feel ashamed or embarrassed about masturbation, partly because of out-dated myths (e.g. that masturbation is harmful).

**Sexual health benefits of masturbation**

Some of the known sexual health benefits of masturbation include the following:

- It is a safer form of sex that carries no risk of sexually transmissible infection or unplanned pregnancy.
- Being familiar with your own sexual responses helps you to communicate your wants and needs to your partner.
- The way parents react to their child’s masturbation can impact on the child’s sexual attitudes and behaviours in adulthood.

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**General health benefits of masturbation**

Some of the general health benefits of masturbation may include that it:

- relaxes your muscles
- helps you to fall asleep
- promotes the release of the brain’s opioid-like neurotransmitters (called endorphins), which cause feelings of physical and mental wellbeing
- reduces stress
- enhances self-esteem.

**Myths about masturbation**

Masturbation has been wrongly blamed for a range of health problems, including:

- blindness
- mental health issues
- sexual perversion
- reduced sexual function.

**Frequency of masturbation**

A common concern, especially among young people, is the frequency of masturbation. ‘Normal’ ranges from several times a day, week or month to not masturbating at all. How often a person masturbates is not a problem, unless it is linked to an obsessive compulsive disorder where the same activity must be repeated over and over.

**Masturbation in young people**

During adolescence, it is normal for young people to feel nervous or unsure about their developing bodies and sexual feelings. Mixed messages and misinformation about masturbation from their parents, friends and the media can make them more anxious. It is important for parents to recognise that adolescence is a time of sexual
development and experimentation, and that masturbation is a way for young people to explore their own bodies.

Masturbation in young children

Young children pick up on their parents’ attitudes towards masturbation from an early age. If parents react negatively to body exploration, self-soothing behaviour or nudity, their child can feel ashamed of their body, sexual feelings and behaviours. Studies show that how parents react can also impact on their child’s sexual attitudes and behaviours in adulthood.

Tips for parents include:

- Remember that children masturbate for many different reasons, including curiosity, exploration and sensory pleasure.
- Reassure yourself that masturbation in children is normal.
- Try to focus on the setting, rather than the activity itself. For example, if your child is masturbating in public, you can tell them that what they are doing is fine, but it is a private behaviour that they can do in a private place (like toileting).
- Understand that children may turn to masturbation in times of stress. If your child’s masturbation is affecting playtime and other activities, you should find out what is making them anxious or upset.

If you are concerned about your child’s behaviour, you should talk with your doctor or paediatrician.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Paediatrician
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. (03) 9257 0100 or freecall 1800 013 952

Things to remember

- Masturbation is a safer form of sex that carries no risk of sexually transmissible infection or unplanned pregnancy.
- Being familiar with your own sexual responses helps you to communicate your wants and needs to your partner.
- The way parents react to their child’s masturbation can impact on the child’s sexual attitudes and behaviours in adulthood.

References

- Masturbation at a glance, Planned Parenthood Federation of America Inc. More information here.

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More information

Sexual health

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Sexual health basics
- Sexual relationships
- Sexuality and sexual identity
- Sex education
- Sexual assault and abuse
- Contraception and abortion
- Sexual issues throughout life
- Health conditions and sexual issues

Sexual health basics

- Contraception - condoms for men
  Condoms are the most effective way to reduce your risk of contracting a sexually transmissible infection (STI) during sex.
- Contraception - condoms for women
  The female condom is effective in preventing an unplanned pregnancy and protecting against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- Contraception - choices
  The method of contraception you choose will depend on your general health, lifestyle and relationships.
- Contraception - emergency contraception
  It is best to take emergency contraception as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of having unprotected sex, but it still works well within 96 hours (four days).
Masturbation
Masturbation is a normal and healthy way for people to explore their own bodies.

Oral sex
Oral sex is using your mouth, lips or tongue to stimulate your partner’s genitals or anus. Both men and women can give and receive oral sex.

Safe sex
Safe sex is sexual contact that doesn't involve the exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood between partners.

Sex – are you ready
It is normal to have mixed feelings about having sex with someone else.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
It is not difficult to avoid catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Women's sexual and reproductive health (video)
Find out some facts about women's sexual and reproductive health - including fertility, contraception, menopause, parental consent and conditions (such as PCOS and endometriosis).

Sexual relationships

Partying safely and sex
Partying is fun but being out of it on alcohol or drugs can put you at risk of unwanted or unsafe sex.

Safe sex
Safe sex is sexual contact that doesn't involve the exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood between partners.

Sex – are you ready
It is normal to have mixed feelings about having sex with someone else.

Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men
Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

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Find out some facts about women's sexual and reproductive health - including fertility, contraception, menopause, parental consent and conditions (such as PCOS and endometriosis).

Sexuality and sexual identity

Bisexuality
Bisexuality is when a person finds men and women physically, sexually or emotionally attractive.

Family violence and the LGBTIQ communities
Within Australia, intimate partner violence is the most common form of family violence. Evidence presented to the Royal Commission into Family Violence suggests intimate partner violence is as...

Gay male sexuality
There is no real explanation as to why some men are gay and others are not; it is just part of the wide variety of human sexuality.

Lesbian sexuality
Many women report they have lesbian experiences or feelings, but do not think of themselves as lesbians.

Men and sexuality
Sexuality is not about whom we have sex with, or how often we have it. Sexuality is about our sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. We can find other people.

Mental health and wellbeing support for LGBTI people
If you or someone you know requires support from an LGBTI or mental health organisation there are services available.

Sexuality explained

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
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Switchboard (Victoria)

The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (Victoria) is a telephone helpline that gives advice, information, counselling and referrals to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) people in...

Trans and gender diverse people

Your gender is what feels natural to you, even if it is different from your biological sex. Some people may not feel comfortable with their biological sex but choose to live with the gender with which...

Women and sexuality

Most girls start puberty around 10 years old, but it can be earlier or later than that. Your body will go through big changes as you change from a girl into a young woman. For some girls (and women...
• Abortion procedures - medication
  Mifepristone, also called RU486 or the 'abortion pill', is used to terminate (end) a pregnancy up to nine weeks.

• Abortion procedures - surgical
  Abortion is one of the most common and safest types of surgery in Australia.

• Contraception after giving birth
  After having a baby, you need to choose an effective method of contraception if you don't want to have another baby straight away.

• Contraception - choices
  The method of contraception you choose will depend on your general health, lifestyle and relationships.

• Contraception - condoms for men
  Condoms are the most effective way to reduce your risk of contracting a sexually transmissible infection (STI) during sex.

• Contraception - condoms for women
  The female condom is effective in preventing an unplanned pregnancy and protecting against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

• Contraception - diaphragms
  The diaphragm acts as a barrier method of contraception.

• Contraception - emergency contraception
  It is best to take emergency contraception as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of having unprotected sex, but it still works well within 96 hours (four days).

• Contraception - implants and injections
  Hormonal contraception for women is available as implants or injections that slowly release hormones into the body over time.

• Contraception - injections for men
  Contraceptive injections for men are not yet available in Australia, but clinical studies suggest that they may provide a safe, effective and reversible method of male contraception in the future.

• Contraception - intrauterine devices (IUD)
  An intrauterine device (IUD) is a small contraceptive device that is put into the uterus (womb) to prevent pregnancy.

• Contraception - Louna's lowdown on emergency contraception (video)
  This video was made by the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, with Louna Maroun to inform teenagers about this safe, effective form of contraception to prevent an unplanned pregnancy.

• Contraception - the combined pill
  The two types of oral contraception available in Australia are the combined pill, known as the Pill, and the mini pill.

• Contraception - the mini pill
  The two types of oral contraception available in Australia are the combined pill, known as "the Pill", and the mini pill.

• Contraception - tubal ligation
  Sterilisation is a permanent method of contraception that a woman can choose if she is sure that she does not want children in the future.

• Contraception - vaginal ring
  The vaginal ring works in a similar way to the oral contraceptive pill to prevent pregnancy.

• Contraception - vasectomy
  Having a vasectomy does not affect a man's ability to produce male sex hormones, enjoy sex or reach orgasm.

• Pregnancy - unplanned
  When a woman does not want to become a parent, her pregnancy options may include abortion or adoption.

Sexual issues throughout life

• Disability and sexuality
  Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support.
• Intellectual disability and sexuality
  People with intellectual disability can express their sexuality in satisfying ways...

• Menopause and sexual issues
  Menopause, the final menstrual period, is a natural event that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years...

• Puberty
  Adjusting to the many changes that happen around puberty can be difficult for both parents and young people...

• Sex and chronic illness
  Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support...

Health conditions and sexual issues

• Brain injury and sexual issues
  A brain injury can change the way a person experiences and expresses their sexuality...

• Diabetes and erectile dysfunction
  Men with diabetes are more prone to problems with erectile dysfunction or impotence...

• Disability and sexuality
  Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support...

• HIV and men - safer sex
  HIV transmission can occur from men to women and from women to men as well as between men who have sex with men...

• HIV and women – having children
  Women living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or women whose partner is HIV-positive, may wish to have children but feel concerned about the risk of transmission of the virus to themselves if...

• HIV and women – safer sex
  Practising safe sex is important, whether your partner is HIV-positive or not...

• Intellectual disability and sexuality
  People with intellectual disability can express their sexuality in satisfying ways...

• Parkinson's disease and sexual issues
  Communication is the best remedy for all types of relationship problems, including sexual problems caused by Parkinson's disease...

• Sex and chronic illness
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Related information on other websites

- Planned Parenthood Federation of America Inc.

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