

QUICKIES: **masturbation**

a sex ed summary from scarleteen.com

Masturbation is a word used to describe when people explore and express their sexuality by touching themselves, without a partner. People often do that by touching their genitals, but masturbation can involve any body parts. It doesn't have to involve genitals unless someone wants it to. Masturbation is about touching your own body in whatever ways feel good to *you*.

Many people have been masturbating since they were little, but some people only start masturbating, or doing so more often, when they are in or around their teen years. There's nothing wrong with masturbation. It's even good for us in some ways.

Masturbation doesn't:

- Cause permanent changes to the body or hurt someone (unless someone injures themselves)
- Stop someone's genitals or whole body from growing
- Release "stored up" sperm or sexual fluids

Masturbation can:

- Help relieve menstrual cramps or other muscle tension
- Be relaxing or soothing
- Help someone learn how to orgasm or make it easier to orgasm
- Be a kind of self-care
- Improve sex with partners by giving someone a better sense of what feels good to them and more comfort with their own body
- Help improve sexual self-esteem and body image

How do people masturbate?

People usually masturbate in spaces where, and at times when, they feel safe and comfortable. It also should be in a place that's private, and only something to do with other people with consent. There's no right or wrong way to masturbate. What someone likes also isn't always the same: it can change from day to day, or from one time of life to another. Many people touch both their genitals and other parts of their bodies while masturbating. Many people fantasize before or during masturbation, and some people use sexual media with masturbation.

Some ways people masturbate with their genitals are:

- By touching them with hands and fingers (usually with lube)

- By using something to safely surround the penis
- With vibrations to the penis, scrotum, vulva, clitoris, anus or general genital area
- By putting fingers, sex toys made for vaginal use or other safe objects into the vaginal canal
- By putting fingers, sex toys made for anal use or other safe objects on or inside the anus
- By doing something that makes the whole genital area feel good, like “humping” a pillow

Some basic ways to keep masturbation physically safe are:

- Don't use anything that might cut, scrape, or burn you, or that has very harsh suction.
- Wash your hands before and after you masturbate.
- If you use toys or other objects, be sure and clean them with something safe for your body first. You can also use condoms or other latex barriers with them to help prevent bacterial infections.
- If anything starts to hurt during masturbation, stop doing it.

Can you masturbate too much? There's no one right or wrong amount of masturbation, just what feels right for each person. If masturbation is keeping you from doing other things you enjoy, like being with friends or participating in your other interests, interfering with your responsibilities (like school or a job), making you sick, like causing any sort of regular injury or getting in the way of your sleep, or creating emotional distress for you, then it's probably time to cut back, or change your habits in some other way. If you don't want to masturbate and literally feel like you can't stop yourself, or have really conflicted feelings about it, you can talk to a mental healthcare provider.

If feels good to you and good for your life, however often you masturbate is probably just fine.

What if masturbation doesn't feel good?

There are a few common reasons masturbation may not feel good. A person may not have found what feels good to them yet, and just need to keep experimenting. Masturbating when you're not really into it often won't feel good. Some people have trouble physically doing the things that feel good. Feelings of shame or guilt about masturbation can make it feel bad, too. Some days or times just aren't the right ones: if we're very tired, stressed, distracted, ill or upset, it just may not be the right time for us to masturbate.

If or when masturbation isn't something a person wants to do, no one ever has to do it. Masturbation is optional, not mandatory. People can be fine and healthy whether they masturbate or not.

This handout was prepared by Sam Wall and Heather Corinna and is a summary of Going Solo: The Basics of Masturbation (https://www.scarleteen.com/article/bodies_sexuality/going_solo_the_basics_of_masturbation) by Heather Corinna. © 2016 - 2019 Scarleteen/Heather Corinna. All Rights Reserved.