

# QUICKIES: sexual anatomy and pleasure a sex ed summary from scarleteen.com

Sexual anatomy is about far more than genitals. We can explore and experience our sexuality and pleasure with potentially *all* the parts of the body.

Here are some of the body parts most often involved when people explore sexuality and seek pleasure.

**The brain:** The largest, most important and most active sexual organ of the body isn't a penis or vagina. It's the brain!

Sexuality is usually about the body. It's also just as much about thoughts and feelings. Even in the ways it is physical, we feel those sensations through our central nervous system. That's all brain stuff. Without a brain, we couldn't experience sexuality or pleasure. The brain also releases hormones that influence how sex feels. All of our body parts are communicating with the brain during sex. The brain is also primarily responsible for orgasm and is where orgasm actually happens.

**Erogenous zones:** Erogenous zone is a term used to describe a part of the body that usually feels extra sensitive. That's because it's got a lot of sensory nerve endings. This can include the lips, tongue, palms and fingers, the bottoms of the feet, the inner thighs, nipples, neck, ears, armpits and the genitals.

**The perianal region (the butt):** The anus is the opening (to the rectum, inside the body) that's visible between your buttocks. It and the rectum can be sites of sexual pleasure for people of any gender or sexual orientation. Then there's the prostate. The prostate is a walnut-sized gland in the body that's located below the bladder. If you were born with a penis, you were probably born with a prostate. The prostate is very sensitive to pressure and touch. It can be pleasurable to have it stimulated.

The pudendal nerve is also located in this area, at the bottom of the spine. A lot of the feelings people have in their genitals during orgasm and other parts of sexual response are because of the pudendal nerve talking to the brain.

The pubococcygeus muscle (which some people might call PC or Kegel muscles) is also in this area. It stretches from the pubic bone to the tailbone. It supports the pelvic organs. It usually contracts during orgasm.

The perineal sponge is also in this region for people born with a vulva (all the outside portions of the genitals for someone with a vagina). It's internal to the body, between the bottom of the vaginal opening and the rectum. It's part of the clitoral system. It is made of nerve endings,

erectile tissue and blood vessels. A person might feel sensations of this sponge from stimulation to the vagina, clitoris or anus or the areas around them.

**The penis:** Any and all parts of the penis may be enjoyable—or not!—when touched during sex or masturbation. The head of the penis usually has a higher number of sensory nerves than the shaft. If a person with a penis has a foreskin, that can also be a source of pleasure. It's full of sensory nerve endings. The testes and scrotum also have many sensory nerve endings. People can find sexual enjoyment through stimulation of their scrotum or testicles.

**The clitoris:** The clitoris is similar to the penis. It is the only part of the body whose only known purpose is pleasure. The clitoral shaft is on the outside of the body, above the urinary opening within the vulva. This is what most people call the whole clitoris. That's only one part of a much larger system that has parts both inside and outside the body. The crura, the corpus carvenosum, the urethral sponge and the vestibular bulbs are all on the inside of the body. They are also parts of the clitoris that can provide pleasure.

**The vagina:** The vagina is a muscular tube inside the body. On one end of it is the vaginal opening, the place where things can go inside. On the other the end, inside the body, it ends at the cervix, which is the opening to the uterus. The majority of nerve endings in the vagina are in the first third of it closer to the opening. You may have heard of the “G-spot” inside the vagina. The G-spot is part of the internal clitoris and is within that first third of the vagina. Touching that area can be pleasurable. The back two-thirds of the vagina aren't very sensitive. This is one reason why people with vaginas usually won't reach orgasm or experience a lot of pleasure from vaginal intercourse alone.

**The labia and mons:** The mons, the part of the vulva where most of the pubic hair is, has sensory nerve endings. The labia are the parts that look like lips or folds of skin. They are also very sensitive. Because of how everything fits closely together in the genitals, touching these body parts can also stimulate the parts of the clitoris.

Not everyone's genitals or other body parts behave the same way. Not everyone likes or feels the same things or areas of the body in the same way.

What feels good to one person during sex or masturbation can, and often will, change over time. It also won't always feel the same way with one partner as it does with another. What feels good varies from person to person. That's one reason it's important for partners to talk to each other about what feels good during sex. Even though we all have the same or very similar body parts and systems, we each experience sex in a unique way.