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A guide to clitoral sex

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The clitoris

Many people, both scientists and individuals, proudly claim to have “discovered” the clitoris. For a long time, the clitoris seems to have been regarded as the principal and most obvious female sex organ, but at some point in the 19th century this focus on the clitoris disappeared in favour of the vagina. Female sexuality was increasingly associated with child-bearing, and the clitoris was largely obliterated from the sexual map. In 1905, however, the clitoris was officially “re-discovered” by Sigmund Freud. Freud also put the female orgasm back under the spotlight, believing there were two kinds of orgasm: clitoral and vaginal. The vaginal orgasm, in Freud’s view, was the “mature” and desirable kind. Since the mid 20th century researchers and activists, mainly from the United States and Australia, have been working to gain renewed

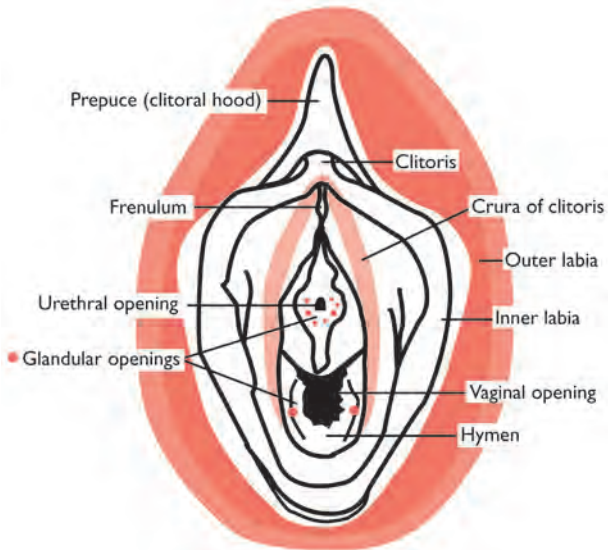
recognition of the importance of the clitoris to female sexuality. For most girls and women, the clitoris is the most important body part in terms of sexual pleasure.

Parts of the clitoris

The clitoris forms part of the vulva, the external genitalia of a woman. The clitoris is a piece of erectile tissue, rich in nerve endings and blood vessels, and consists of various parts. Where the inner labia meet at the top, there is a foreskin, the prepuce or clitoral hood, covering the clitoral glans or head. This is the visible part of the clitoris. If you lift up the prepuce or part the labia, you can see the clitoral glans. The glans may be partially or completely fused to the prepuce, in which case you can feel it as a small knob underneath. The glans contains 6,000–8,000 sensory nerve endings, more than any other part of the

human body. This sensitivity explains why so many women enjoy clitoral stimulation. Inside the prepuce are glands that produce an oily secretion. When this is produced in larger quantities, it appears white and is called smegma. On the underside of the glans is the frenulum, a taut band of tissue.

Beneath the prepuce, the glans gives way to the corpus or body of the clitoris. The corpus splits into two legs, the crura of clitoris. The crura enclose first the urethra and then the vagina, ending somewhere in the tissue between the head of the vagina and the rectum. The crura are embedded at a slight angle along the inside of the pubic bone. They vary in length and resemble an upside-down V. Adjacent to each of the crura is a bulbous area of erectile tissue, the bulbs of clitoris, enclosing the vaginal walls on each side.

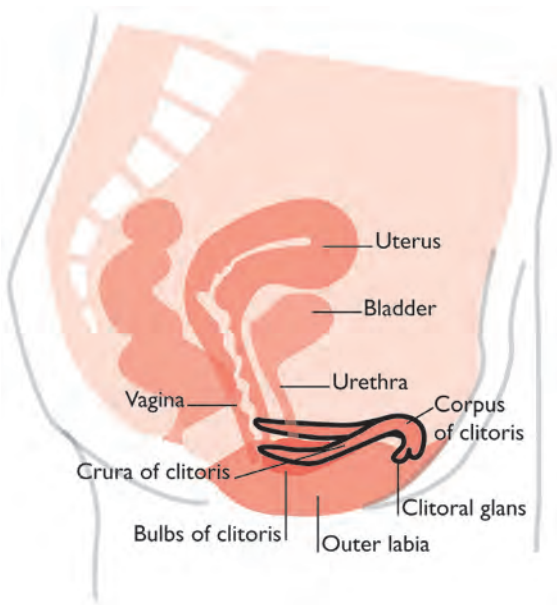


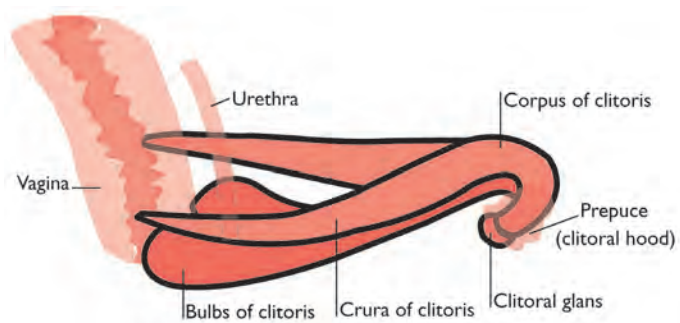
Note: The crura are internal and not visible from outside.

The clitoris is the starting point of long nerve fibres that may continue for 12–15 cm down the inside of the thighs. Through nerves, ligaments and muscles, the clitoris is connected in various ways to other parts of the lower abdomen.

Size

During puberty the clitoris grows, along with the other genitalia. Its size varies greatly from one woman to another. Hormone levels are one of the determining factors. A pubescent girl usually has a bigger clitoris than a menopausal woman. However, size has no impact on sensitivity or ability to orgasm. The width of the clitoral glans generally ranges from 2 to 5 mm. The length generally ranges from 3 to 7 mm,





but some girls are born with a much longer glans. The corpus usually measures 2–5 cm in length, the crura around 9 cm, and the bulbs of clitoris 3–7 cm.

Clitoral sex

Clitoral stimulation is the most common form of female masturbation. For most women, it is also the easiest and fastest way to reach orgasm – solo or with a partner. Some women use more or less the same technique every time they have sex, or alternate between a few favourite techniques, while others like frequent variety. Many women use the same technique on their own and with a partner, while others like to use different techniques.

Some women enjoy light, gentle stimulation, while others prefer it to be harder. Many women like the

stimulation to become harder, more definite and rhythmical, the closer they get to orgasm. Fast and slow movements are another form of variety. During sex, some women like frequent variations in clitoral stimulation, while others enjoy one form of stimulation increasing in intensity until they reach orgasm. It's a good idea not to give up on any one form of stimulation too quickly, since the sensation may intensify after a while.

The clitoral glans varies in sensitivity between individuals and between different stages of arousal. You may need to vary the stimulation technique to make it pleasurable. The glans may be so sensitive that touching it directly is painful, but some women find this pleasurable. If you begin sex with direct stimulation of the glans, it may feel a little dry and sensitive

unless your vagina has become engorged and lubricated. Saliva, oil and especially lubricant can make it more comfortable. Many women who do not produce a lot of natural lubrication like to use lubricant, but even those who do become wet may find extra lubrication pleasurable and arousing. If you know you are going to be using a condom, it is important to use a water or silicone-based lubricant or a plastic condom. Oil-based lubricants destroy ordinary latex condoms.

Arousal and orgasm

What happens when we become sexually aroused is that blood rushes to the erectile tissue, stimulating the nerve cells in the genitals. All parts of the clitoris swell and stiffen. The corpus becomes erect beneath the prepuce, and the much enlarged glans rises

with it. The erectile tissue of the inner labia becomes engorged – so much so that the inner labia may become three times their normal size. The outer labia too become engorged, which causes them to swell, harden and part. The vagina stretches and deepens. The erectile tissue surrounding the vagina makes it swell, and the bulbs of clitoris engorge, causing the vagina to open. The body of erectile tissue containing pairs of glands that surrounds the urethra also engorges and can often be felt through the front wall of the vagina, which becomes slightly rough. Special moisture – lubrication – appears in the vagina, as pressure from the surrounding blood vessels forces a transparent fluid out through the vaginal walls. Another, slightly thicker, oily fluid seeps from glands at the vaginal opening.

When a woman is sexually aroused, her body may react instantaneously, and she may feel engorgement, wetness, tingling and throbbing all at once in her genitals. Her arousal can be turned off again equally fast, and everything will return to "normal" for instance if something doesn't feel right. Arousal may also build up gradually, in which case sexual stimulation, or a certain kind of stimulation, is not always pleasurable until the body is completely ready. Initially, for example, clitoral stimulation may feel good, but not vaginal stimulation until the vagina is fully engorged, dilated and wet.

During sexual arousal, the brain supplies the blood with a number of "feel-good" hormones and "sex chemicals", and the clitoris becomes increasingly sensitive. Signals from the brain produce "sexual tension"

in the pelvic floor muscles, which contract. If sexual stimulation continues, this muscle tension eventually explodes into short contractions – an orgasm. Cascades of hormones and chemicals are released into the blood. Some women experience ejaculation from the glands surrounding the urethra. Many find that their whole body tenses, their hands clench, or they react with a variety of spontaneous body movements. After orgasm, the engorgement in the erectile tissue does not subside so fast, so many women are capable of multiple orgasms. Some need only wait a few seconds before continuing their sexual activity.

The sensation of orgasm varies from one person to another and may also vary from one occasion to the next. Sometimes it feels like a slight tickling around the clitoris; on other occasions it is a wonderful fee-

ling throughout the lower abdomen. It may also feel like a great wave, a warm rush, or a sense of ecstasy that fills body and mind.

Orgasm is a physical phenomenon, but not necessarily one that occurs of its own accord. Body and mind are connected. To experience orgasm, you may need to be really hungry for sex and to concentrate on what is happening, how it feels, and what you are doing. Some people also use fantasies to reach orgasm. Above all, you need to feel physically turned on, which may happen without mental or emotional involvement. Conversely, your mind may want to have sex but your body may say no – it is not turned on at this time, in which case you will usually not climax. However, if you have sex when you are in the mood, in a way that feels truly pleasurable and only gets better, then you

will usually reach orgasm.

Approaching the clitoris

Many women prefer to have their clitoris approached gradually, especially if they haven't been properly sexually aroused for a while. There are several ways of doing this: for instance, stroking that slowly gets closer to the genitals, or licking the inner thigh, again getting closer and closer. The stroking can move to the mons veneris and labia – up and down, so that the outer labia eventually open to expose the inner labia. A partner's tongue can perform the same moves. You can cup your hand over the entire genital area and press, rub and vibrate without removing it. “Drumming” fingers or hands on the genitals may also be pleasurable. You or your partner can try making stroking motions with the fingers or tongue,

concentrating on the opening between the labia and slowly approaching the clitoris. Having your partner blow on the glans – perhaps while pressing two fingers on the inner or outer labia – may also provide a pleasurable start. The same goes for gently stretching the inner labia, which stimulates the nerve endings in and around the clitoris. Another, slower, way to start is to tickle the clitoris with a piece of fabric or a feather. Massage and pressure are alternative approaches. Many women enjoy having their mons veneris and outer labia massaged, even so hard that the pubic bone below is felt. During stroking and massage it is possible to stimulate the clitoris by briefly touching the glans from time to time. Another variation is to press an immobile finger gently against the glans. When the clitoris starts to throb and swell, it may be ready for further stimulation. Many wo-

men enjoy more definite clitoral stimulation the more aroused they become.

Manual stimulation

The clitoris is easily stimulated using one or more fingers. Many people concentrate on stroking only the right or left side of the glans and corpus, while others most enjoy stroking with one or more fingers down towards the frenulum, or even closer to the urethral opening. Some people also use their palm or the whole side of their hand. Because the clitoris may be sensitive to direct touch, many people stroke it only through the prepuce. Another variation is to move the inner labia so that the prepuce moves back and forth over the clitoris.

The clitoral glans can be held between thumb and forefinger. You can either hold it still or try gently squeezing and rolling it between your fingers. You can also hold the corpus and move it up and down in small, gentle motions.

Some women enjoy massage and pressure on the crura, which after a while may arouse a feeling of intense pleasure throughout the clitoris. If you run your fingers from the glans outward, along the inside edge of the pubic bone, and gently press, then you may be able to feel the crura and the bulbs of clitoris, depending on how they are situated. You can also try starting from the vaginal opening and feeling your way towards the ischium in the pelvis to find the crura.

Oral stimulation

Stimulating the genitals with the mouth is called oral sex. The feeling of “being licked” is like no other, and many women find it the most pleasurable sex technique with a partner. There are many variations on oral sex: nibbling, kissing, soft, broad licks across the entire genital area or between the labia, or firm massage with the tip of the tongue around or right on the clitoris. Lips can stroke and press the clitoris. Vibrating stimulation is also possible if your partner holds his/her mouth against your genitals, or more specifically your clitoris, and “hums”. Some women like it if their partner gently sucks on the glans or one of the inner labia.

Rubbing

Many women enjoy rubbing their entire vulva against something: a piece of furniture, a pillow, or a partner's body (genitals, buttocks or thigh). Others also enjoy rubbing something against the clitoris. Some like to use a hard, smooth object, while others prefer something rougher, blunter or softer. Different surfaces provide different temperature sensations – some women enjoy the cold feel of plastic or glass, whereas others prefer the warm feel of fabric. “Slapping” with a suitable object may be pleasurable too. Underwear can be stretched into a narrow, hard band that you can rub against the glans.

During oral or manual stimulation, placing something between the clitoris and the source of stimulation (tongue or fingers) can enhance your pleasure.

This could be fabric, plastic wrap, leather or latex. For example, massage through your underwear, or even through the bedcovers, may feel best.

Vibrations

For most women, definite vibrations against the clitoris are the easiest and fastest way to reach orgasm. Vibrations feel different depending on their type and strength. Some women like a light, tickling kind, while others prefer more powerful vibrations such as those from a hand-held shower with the head unscrewed.

Many women enjoy vibrations from a special vibrator, massage device or electric toothbrush. A vibrator can be pressed against the clitoris and can massage on and around it. However, some women prefer to

move their body against the vibrator – for instance, with it held still by a partner or wedged into a folded pillow that they can rub against. You can also put a vibrating object in your underwear or even attach it to your clitoris.

Vibrations from a bus seat or a bike saddle on a gravel road are transmitted to the clitoris and may be sufficiently stimulating to produce an orgasm.

Stimulation with the pelvic floor muscles

Many women can create pleasurable sensations in their clitoris and entire lower abdomen by alternately tensing and relaxing their pelvic floor muscles. Different muscles, such as those around the clitoris, in the vagina, around the urethra and around the anus, can produce slightly different sensations and put the fo-

cus on different areas. You can try this during direct clitoral stimulation too, which will amplify the sensation in your clitoris. During clitoral stimulation you can also press your pelvic floor muscles down, as if trying to squeeze out the last few drops of urine. This increases pressure on the clitoris, making it extra sensitive, and it may feel as if it is vibrating or trembling.

Depending on how your glans and corpus are situated, you may also find it pleasurable to squeeze and rub your thighs together.

Other simultaneous stimulation

Many women like to concentrate on the clitoris during sex, while others experience the most pleasure when several spots are stimulated simultaneously, or when stimulation moves between various spots. If

you concentrate on several spots and body parts at the same time, arousal and pleasurable feelings may be amplified, leading to orgasm. If, for instance, one of your breasts is stimulated in just the way you like, this may create thrilling sensations running between your breast and clitoris. Variations on the theme of pleasurable combinations include clitoral stimulation coupled with massaging of the breasts, mons veneris or buttocks. Many women also enjoy pressure on the outer labia, and stroking of the inner labia, perineum and anus. Pressing, massaging and rubbing other parts of the genitalia may indirectly stimulate the clitoris, since the organs are connected by muscles and ligaments.

During sexual intercourse, including penetration of the vagina by a penis, many women enjoy having their clitoris simultaneously stimulated with stroking or vibrations. Clitoral stimulation may be what makes intercourse pleasurable for them, or it may enhance an already pleasurable sensation.

Physical stimulation is not the only thing that people find stimulating or arousing when they have sex. They are often stimulated by a combination of activities such as simultaneously stimulating a partner, role play, watching themselves in the mirror, certain positions, words, deep kissing, and reading, listening to or watching something arousing. For many people, fantasizing during sex comes naturally.

Positions

During clitoral sex, different positions can fulfil different functions. Stroking, massaging and rubbing may feel different, and vary in intensity, depending on how you are lying, sitting or standing. Many women also need to hold their legs in a particular position – be it straight or bent – to reach orgasm. Many women find it easiest to reach orgasm lying on their back with their whole body stretched out. Others can only reach orgasm lying on their stomach, when it is easy to use their whole body to wiggle and thrust their hips or rub against something.

With a partner, some positions may make clitoral stimulation easier than others. If a woman lies on her back, stands up or stands on all fours, it is easy for her partner to reach her clitoris from different directions

with his/her hands or tongue. She can rub against a partner underneath her, and a partner on top can rub his/her pubic bone or genitals against the clitoris, or place a leg against it.

Many people find certain positions particularly arousing in their own right and will choose them for this very reason.

Problems and irritation

Dryness and irritation around the inner labia and clitoris and inside the vagina are a common problem. Dryness is often caused by overzealous washing and the use of soap. If you avoid using soap and moisturize dry areas with oil, you can usually restore the balance quickly. If this doesn't help, you need to go and see a gynecologist or midwife for an examina-

tion. Other possible causes of vaginal discomfort include fungal infections, “invisible” flat genital warts, or other sexually transmitted infections that it is important to have diagnosed and treated.

If you have been circumcised, this may lead to reduced sensitivity. The effects vary between women and depend on the method of circumcision. Some circumcised women no longer have their clitoral glans. They can, of course, still enjoy sex through stimulation of the corpus and crura of clitoris or other techniques, such as stimulating other body parts. Some circumcised women may have problems with scar tissue, recurring pain and discomfort. You should seek medical advice on relieving such problems, especially if your genitals have been sewn up.

Irritation and pain in or around the clitoris and vagina may also be due to minor chafing resulting from prior sexual intercourse. In this case, the area needs to rest until it feels fine again. Pain and discomfort during sex often occur because you are not sufficiently aroused, and the mucous membranes and erectile tissue are not ready for stimulation and intercourse. If something feels uncomfortable during sex, this is your body's way of telling you that you should wait, refrain or try another method. A good general rule is that if something feels good, then it is good.

If you become aware of a change in the mucous membranes of your vagina, or if you are finding it harder to produce lubrication or reach orgasm, it's a good idea to check any medication you are taking. Dry, tender mucous membranes and reduced ability

to orgasm are common side effects of certain drugs. Nicotine adversely affects blood circulation and may, in the long run, cause difficulties with engorgement and lubrication.

Further reading

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