



# Masturbation

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**Masturbation** is the sexual stimulation of one's own genitals for sexual arousal or other sexual pleasure, usually to the point of orgasm.<sup>[1]</sup> The stimulation may involve hands, fingers, everyday objects, sex toys such as vibrators, or combinations of these.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Mutual masturbation (mutual manual stimulation of the genitals between partners) can be a substitute for sexual penetration. Studies have found that masturbation is frequent in humans of both sexes and all ages, although there is variation. Various medical and psychological benefits have been attributed to a healthy attitude toward sexual activity in general and to masturbation in particular. No causal relationship is known between masturbation and any form of mental or physical disorder.<sup>[3]</sup>

Masturbation has been depicted in art since prehistoric times and is mentioned and discussed in very early writings. In the 18th and 19th centuries, some European theologians and physicians described it as "heinous", "deplorable", and "hideous", but during the 20th century, these taboos generally declined. There has been an increase in discussion and portrayal of masturbation in art, popular music, television, films, and literature. Today, religions vary in their views of masturbation; some view it as a spiritually detrimental practice, some see it as not spiritually detrimental, and others take a situational view. The legal status of masturbation has also varied through history and masturbation in public is illegal in most countries.<sup>[4]</sup>

In the West, masturbation in private or with a partner is generally considered a normal and healthy part of sexual enjoyment. Animal masturbation has been observed in many species, both in the wild and in captivity.<sup>[5][6][7]</sup>



Gustav Klimt's *Woman seated with thighs apart* (1916)

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## Etymology

The English word *masturbation* was introduced in the 18th century, based on the Latin verb *masturbari*, alongside the more technical and slightly earlier *onanism*. The Latin verb *masturbari* is of uncertain origin. Suggested derivations include an unattested word for penis, *\*mazdo*, cognate with Greek *mézea μέζεα*, "genitals", or alternatively a corruption of an unattested *\*manusturpare* ("to defile with the hand"), by association with *turbare* "to disturb".<sup>[8][9]</sup>

## Terminology

While *masturbation* is the formal word for this practice, many other expressions are in common use. Terms such as *playing with yourself*, *pleasuring oneself* and slang such as *wanking*,<sup>[10]</sup> *jerking off*,<sup>[11]</sup> and *frigging* are common. *Self-abuse* and *self-pollution*<sup>[12]</sup> were common in early modern times and are still found in modern dictionaries. A large variety of other euphemisms and dysphemisms exist which describe masturbation. For a list of terms, see the entry for *masturbate* in Wiktionary.

## Techniques

Masturbation involves touching, pressing, rubbing or massaging a person's genital area, either with the fingers or against an object such as a pillow; inserting fingers or an object into the vagina or anus (see anal masturbation); and stimulating the penis or vulva with an electric vibrator, which may also be inserted into the vagina or anus. It may also involve touching, rubbing, or pinching the nipples or other erogenous zones while masturbating. Both sexes sometimes apply lubricating substances to intensify sensation.

Reading or viewing pornography, sexual fantasies, or other erotic stimuli may lead to a desire for sexual release such as by masturbation.

Some people get sexual pleasure by inserting objects, such as urethral sounds, into the urethra (the tube through which urine and, in men, semen, flows),<sup>[13]</sup> a practice known as urethral play or "sounding".<sup>[14]</sup> Other objects such as ball point pens and thermometers are sometimes used, although this practice can lead to injury and/or infection.<sup>[15]</sup> Some people masturbate by using machines that simulate intercourse.

Men and women may masturbate until they are close to orgasm, stop for a while to reduce excitement, and then resume masturbating. They may repeat this cycle multiple times. This "stop and go" build-up, known as "edging", can achieve even stronger orgasms.<sup>[16]</sup> Rarely, people quit stimulation just before orgasm to retain the heightened energy that normally comes down after orgasm.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Male

The most common masturbation technique among males is to hold the penis with a loose fist and then to move the hand up and down the shaft. This type of stimulation is typically all that is required to achieve orgasm and ejaculation. The speed of the hand motion will vary, although it is common for the speed to increase as ejaculation nears and for it to decrease during the ejaculation itself.<sup>[18]</sup>

Male masturbation techniques may differ between males who have been circumcised and those who have not. Some techniques which may work for one individual can be difficult or uncomfortable for another. For males who have not been circumcised, stimulation of the penis typically comes from the "pumping" of the foreskin, whereby the foreskin is held and slid up and down over the glans, which, depending on foreskin length, is completely or partially covered and then uncovered in a rapid motion. The outer foreskin glides smoothly over the inner foreskin. The glans itself may widen and lengthen as the stimulation continues, becoming slightly darker in colour, while the gliding action of the foreskin reduces friction. This technique may also be used by some circumcised men who have sufficient excess skin remaining from their circumcision.

For circumcised males, on whom the glans is mostly or completely uncovered, this technique creates more direct contact between the hand and the glans. To avoid friction, irritation and soreness from this resulting friction, some may prefer to use a personal lubricant, masturbation cream or saliva.

The shaft skin can also be slid back and forth with just the index finger and thumb wrapped around the penis. A variation on this is to place the fingers and thumb on the penis as if playing a flute, and then shuttle them back and forth.<sup>[18]</sup> Lying face down on a comfortable surface such as a mattress or pillow, the penis can be rubbed against it. This technique may include the use of a simulacrum, or artificial vagina.

There are many other variations on male masturbation techniques. Men may also rub or massage the glans, the rim of the glans, and the frenular delta. Some men place both hands directly on their penis during masturbation, while others may use their free hand to fondle their testicles, nipples, or other parts of their body. The nipples are erogenous zones, and vigorous stimulation of them during masturbation usually causes the penis to become erect more quickly than it would otherwise. Some may keep their hand stationary while pumping into it with pelvic thrusts in order to simulate the motions of sexual intercourse. Others may also use vibrators and other sexual devices more commonly associated with female masturbation. A few extremely flexible males can reach and stimulate their penis with their tongue or lips, and so perform autofellatio.

The prostate gland is one of the organs that contributes fluid to semen. As the prostate is touch-sensitive, some directly stimulate it using a well-lubricated finger or dildo inserted through the anus into the rectum. Stimulating the prostate from outside, via pressure on the perineum, can be pleasurable as well. Some men also enjoy anal stimulation, with fingers or otherwise, without any prostate stimulation.

A somewhat controversial ejaculation control technique is to put pressure on the perineum, about halfway between the scrotum and the anus, just before ejaculating. This can, however, redirect semen into the bladder (referred to as retrograde ejaculation).



Two vibrators in a sex shop



Masturbating by gripping and sliding the foreskin back and forth

## Female

Female masturbation involves the stroking or rubbing of a woman's vulva, especially her clitoris, with an index or middle fingers, or both. Sometimes one or more fingers may be inserted into the vagina to stroke its frontal wall where the G-spot may be located.<sup>[19]</sup> Masturbation aids such as a vibrator, dildo or Ben Wa balls can also be used to stimulate the vagina and clitoris. Many women caress their breasts or stimulate a nipple with the free hand and anal stimulation is also enjoyed by some. Personal lubricant is sometimes used during masturbation, especially when penetration is involved, but this is not universal and many women find their natural lubrication sufficient.



Female masturbation using a vibrator

Common positions include lying on back or face down, sitting, squatting, kneeling or standing. In a bath or shower a female may direct tap water at her clitoris and vulva. Lying face down one may use the hands, one may straddle a pillow, the corner or edge of the bed, a partner's leg or some scrunched-up clothing and "hump" the vulva and clitoris against it. Standing up, a chair, the corner of an item of furniture, or even a washing machine can be used to stimulate the clitoris through the labia and clothing. Some masturbate only using pressure applied to the clitoris without direct contact, for example by pressing the palm or ball of the hand against underwear or other clothing. In the 1920s, Havelock Ellis reported that turn-of-the-century seamstresses using treadle-operated sewing machines could achieve orgasm by sitting near the edge of their chairs.<sup>[20]</sup>

Women can sexually stimulate themselves by crossing their legs tightly and clenching the muscles in their legs, creating pressure on the genitals. This can potentially be done in public without observers noticing. Thoughts, fantasies, and memories of previous instances of arousal and orgasm can produce sexual excitation. Some women can orgasm spontaneously by force of will alone, although this may not strictly qualify as masturbation as no physical stimulus is involved.<sup>[21][22]</sup>

## Mutual masturbation

**Mutual masturbation** involves two or more people who sexually stimulate each other, usually with the hands. It can be practiced by people of any sexual orientation, and can be part of other sexual activity. It may be used as foreplay, or as an alternative to sexual penetration. When used as an alternative to penile-vaginal penetration, the goal may be to preserve virginity or to avoid risk of pregnancy.<sup>[23][24]</sup>

Mutual masturbation can be practiced in pairs or groups with or without actually touching another person for example:

### Non-contact mutual masturbation

Two people masturbating in the presence of each other but not touching.

### Contact mutual masturbation

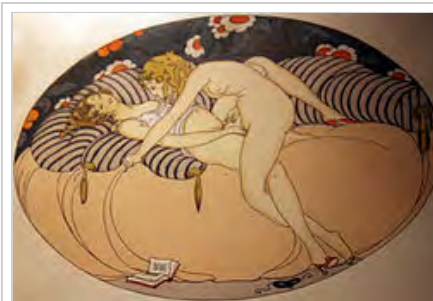
One person touching another person to masturbate. The other person may do the same during or after.

### Non-contact group

More than two people masturbating in the presence of each other in a group but not touching each other.

### Contact group

More than two people physically touching each other to masturbate as a group.



Gerda Wegener's 1925 artwork "Les delassements d'Eros" ("The recreations of Eros"), which depicts sexual activity by two women



Johann Nepomuk Geiger, watercolor, 1840

### Mutual masturbation foreplay

The manual stimulation of each other's genitals where the session eventually leads to sexual intercourse.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Frequency, age, and sex

Frequency of masturbation is determined by many factors, e.g., one's resistance to sexual tension, hormone levels influencing sexual arousal, sexual habits, peer influences, health and one's attitude to masturbation formed by culture; E. Heiby and J. Becker examined the latter.<sup>[26]</sup> Medical causes have also been associated with masturbation.<sup>[27][28][29]</sup>

Different studies have found that masturbation is frequent in humans. Alfred Kinsey's 1950s studies on US population have shown that 92% of men and 62% of women have masturbated during their lifespan.<sup>[22]</sup> Similar results have been found in a 2007 British national probability survey. It was found that, between individuals aged 16 to 44, 95% of men and 71% of women masturbated at some point in their lives. 73% of men and 37% of women reported masturbating in the four weeks before their interview, while 53% of men and 18% of women reported masturbating in the previous seven days.<sup>[30]</sup>

The Merck Manual gives the following statistics: 97% of men and 80% of women have masturbated. It also states that, generally speaking, males masturbate more than females and that the act of masturbation may affect a person negatively due to the disapproving views of others.<sup>[31]</sup>

Masturbation is considered normal when performed by children,<sup>[32][33][34]</sup> even in early infancy.<sup>[27]</sup> In 2009, the Sheffield NHS Health Trust issued a pamphlet called "Pleasure" which discussed the health benefits of masturbation. This was done in response to data and experience from the other EU member states to reduce teen pregnancy and STIs (STDs), and to promote healthy habits.<sup>[35]</sup>

In the book *Human Sexuality: Diversity in Contemporary America*, by Strong, Devault and Sayad, the authors point out, "A baby boy may laugh in his crib while playing with his erect penis". "Baby girls sometimes move their bodies rhythmically, almost violently, appearing to experience orgasm." Italian gynecologists Giorgio Giorgi and Marco Siccardi observed via ultrasound a female fetus possibly masturbating and having what appeared to be an orgasm.<sup>[36]</sup>

Popular belief asserts that individuals of either sex who are not in sexually active relationships tend to masturbate more frequently than those who are; however, much of the time this is not true as masturbation alone or with a partner is often a feature of a relationship. Contrary to conventional wisdom, several studies actually reveal a positive correlation between the frequency of masturbation and the frequency of intercourse. A study has reported a significantly higher rate of masturbation in gay men and women who were in a relationship.<sup>[30][37][38][39]</sup>

Coon and Mitterer stated: "Approximately 70 percent of married women and men masturbate at least occasionally."<sup>[40]</sup>

## Evolutionary utility

Masturbation may increase fertility during intercourse. A 2009 Australian study found daily ejaculation to be an important factor in sperm health and motility.<sup>[41]</sup>

Female masturbation alters conditions in the vagina, cervix and uterus, in ways that can alter the chances of conception from intercourse, depending on the timing of the masturbation. A woman's orgasm between one minute before and 45 minutes after insemination favors the chances of that sperm reaching her egg. If, for example, she has had intercourse with more than one male, such an orgasm can increase the likelihood of a pregnancy by one of them.<sup>[42][43]</sup> Female masturbation can also provide protection against cervical infections by increasing the acidity of the cervical mucus and by moving debris out of the cervix.<sup>[43]</sup>

In males, masturbation flushes out old sperm with low motility from the male's genital tract. The next ejaculate then contains more fresh sperm, which have higher chances of achieving conception during intercourse. If more than one male has intercourse with a female, the sperm with the highest motility will compete more effectively.<sup>[44][45][46]</sup>

## Health effects

The medical consensus is that masturbation is a medically healthy and psychologically normal habit.

<sup>[47][48][49][50][51][52][53][54]</sup> According to the Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy, "It is considered abnormal only when it inhibits partner-oriented behavior, is done in public, or is sufficiently compulsive to cause distress."<sup>[55]</sup>

Masturbation does not produce premature ejaculation.<sup>[56]</sup>

In the US, masturbation was a diagnosable psychological condition until DSM II (1968).<sup>[57]</sup> The American Medical Association consensually declared masturbation as normal in 1972.<sup>[58]</sup>

## General benefits

Sex therapists will sometimes recommend that female patients take time to masturbate to orgasm, for example to help improve sexual health and relationships, to help determine what is erotically pleasing to them, and because mutual masturbation can lead to more satisfying sexual relationships and added intimacy.<sup>[59][60]</sup>

It is held in many mental health circles that masturbation can relieve depression and lead to a higher sense of self-esteem.<sup>[61]</sup> Masturbation can also be particularly useful in relationships where one partner wants more sex than the other – in which case masturbation provides a balancing effect and thus a more harmonious relationship.<sup>[62]</sup>

Mutual masturbation, the act by which two or more partners stimulate themselves in the presence of each other, allows a couple to reveal the "map to [their] pleasure centers". By watching a partner masturbate, one finds out the methods they use to please him- or herself, allowing each partner to learn exactly how the other enjoys being touched. Intercourse, by itself, is often inconvenient or impractical at times to provide sufficient sexual release for many people. Mutual masturbation allows couples to enjoy each other and obtain sexual release as often as they need but without the inconveniences and risks associated with sex.<sup>[62]</sup>

In 2003, an Australian research team led by Graham Giles of The Cancer Council Australia<sup>[63]</sup> found that males masturbating frequently had a lower probability to develop prostate cancer. Men who averaged five or more ejaculations weekly in their 20s had significantly lower risk. However they could not show a direct causation. The study also indicated that increased ejaculation through masturbation rather than intercourse would be more helpful as intercourse is associated with diseases (STDs) that may increase the risk of cancer instead. However, this benefit may be age related. A 2008 study concluded that frequent ejaculation between the ages of 20 and 40 may be correlated with higher risk of developing prostate cancer. On the other hand, frequent ejaculation in one's 50s was found to be correlated with a lower such risk in this same study.<sup>[64]</sup>

A study published in 1997 found an inverse association between death from coronary heart disease and frequency of orgasm even given the risk that myocardial ischaemia and myocardial infarction can be triggered by sexual activity.

The association between frequency of orgasm and all cause mortality was also examined using the midpoint of each response category recorded as number of orgasms per year. The age adjusted odds ratio for an increase of 100 orgasms per year was 0.64 (0.44 to 0.95).

That is, a difference in mortality appeared between any two subjects when one subject ejaculated at around two times per week more than the other. Assuming a broad range average of between 3 and 5 ejaculations per week for healthy males, this would mean 5 to 7 ejaculations per week. This is consistent with a 2003 Australia article on the benefits against prostate cancer. The strength of these correlations increased with increasing frequency of ejaculation.<sup>[65]</sup>

A 2008 study at Tabriz Medical University found ejaculation reduces swollen nasal blood vessels, freeing the airway for normal breathing. The mechanism is through stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system and is long lasting. The study author suggests "It can be done [from] time-to-time to alleviate the congestion and the patient can adjust the number of intercourses or masturbations depending on the severity of the symptoms."<sup>[66]</sup>

Solo masturbation is a sexual activity that is free of risk of sexually transmitted infections. With two or more participants, the risk of sexually transmitted infections, while not eliminated, is much less than with most forms of penetrative sex. Support for such a view, and for making masturbation part of the American sex education curriculum, led to the dismissal of US Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders during the Clinton administration. Some EU Nations promote masturbation in their sex education curricula.

Sexual climax, from masturbation or otherwise, leaves one in a relaxed and contented state. This is frequently followed closely by drowsiness and sleep – particularly when one masturbates in bed.<sup>[67][68][69]</sup>

Some professionals consider masturbation to function as a cardiovascular workout.<sup>[70]</sup> Though research is still as yet scant, those suffering from cardiovascular disorders (particularly those recovering from myocardial infarction, or heart attacks) should resume physical activity (including sexual intercourse and masturbation) gradually and with the frequency and rigor which their physical status will allow. This limitation can serve as encouragement to follow through with physical therapy sessions to help improve endurance. In general, real sex slightly increases energy consumption, according to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine.<sup>[71][72]</sup>

Both sex and masturbation lower blood pressure. A small study demonstrated lower blood pressure in persons who had recently masturbated compared to those with no proximate sexual activity.<sup>[73]</sup>

## Risks

Those who insert objects as aids to masturbation risk them becoming stuck (e.g. as rectal foreign bodies). Men and women can fall prey to this problem. A woman went into a German hospital with two pencils in her bladder, having pierced her urethra after inserting them during masturbation.<sup>[74]</sup>

## Pregnancy

Solo masturbation, or masturbation involving individuals of the same sex, cannot produce pregnancy. Masturbation involving both a man and a woman (see *mutual masturbation*) can result in pregnancy only if semen contacts the vulva.

## Problems for males

A man whose penis has suffered a blunt trauma, severe bend or other injury during intercourse or masturbation may, rarely, sustain a penile fracture<sup>[75][76][77]</sup> or suffer from Peyronie's disease.<sup>[78]</sup> Phimosis is "a contracted foreskin (that) may cause trouble by hurting when an attempt is made to pull the foreskin back".<sup>[79]</sup> In these cases, any energetic manipulation of the penis can be problematic.

A small percentage of men suffer from postorgasmic illness syndrome (POIS), which can cause severe muscle pain throughout the body and other symptoms immediately following ejaculation, whether due to masturbation or partnered sex. The symptoms last for up to a week.<sup>[80][81][82]</sup> Some doctors speculate that the frequency of POIS "in the population may be greater than has been reported in the academic literature",<sup>[83]</sup> and that many POIS sufferers are undiagnosed.<sup>[84]</sup>

## Compulsive masturbation

Compulsive masturbation and other compulsive behaviors can be signs of an emotional problem, which may need to be addressed by a mental health specialist.<sup>[85]</sup> As with any "nervous habit", it is more helpful to consider the causes of compulsive behavior, rather than try to repress masturbation.<sup>[86]</sup>

Masturbation among adolescents contributes to them developing a sense of mastery over sexual impulses, and it has a role in the physical and emotional development of prepubescents and pubescents.<sup>[87]</sup> Babies and toddlers will play with their genitals in much the same way as they play with their ears or toes. If such play becomes all-consuming, it may be necessary to look for an underlying cause of this, such as the child being tense and in need of comfort, or that others may be overreacting and thus reinforcing the habit. It could be caused by a low-grade urinary tract or yeast infection, or the child may be overstimulated and in need of soothing, or indeed understimulated and bored. Alongside many other factors, such as medical evidence, age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, sexualized play or aggression, and precocious or seductive behavior, excessive masturbation may alternatively be an indicator of sexual abuse.<sup>[88][89]</sup>

## History and society

There are depictions of male masturbation in prehistoric rock paintings around the world. Most early people seem to have connected human sexuality with abundance in nature. A clay figurine of the 4th millennium BC from a temple site on the island of Malta, depicts a woman masturbating.<sup>[90]</sup> However, in the ancient world depictions of male masturbation are far more common.

From the earliest records, ancient Sumer had a relaxed attitude toward sex, and masturbation was a popular technique for enhancing potency, either alone or with a partner.<sup>[91]</sup>

Male masturbation became an even more important image in ancient Egypt. When performed by a god it could be considered a creative or magical act: the god Atum was believed to have created the universe by masturbating to ejaculation, and the ebb and flow of the Nile was attributed to the frequency of his ejaculations. Egyptian Pharaohs, in response to this, were at one time required to masturbate ceremonially into the Nile.<sup>[92]</sup>



An Ancient Greek krater from the 6th century BCE of a satyr masturbating

The ancient Greeks had a more relaxed attitude toward masturbation than the Egyptians did, regarding the act as a normal and healthy substitute for other forms of sexual pleasure. They considered it a safety valve against destructive sexual frustration. The Greeks also dealt with female masturbation in both their art and writings. One common term used for it was *anaphlan*, which roughly translates as "up-fire".



Masturbation was depicted in 19th-century Shunga prints, such as this piece by Kunisada



Self-portrait of Egon Schiele in 1911, depicting masturbation



Diogenes, speaking in jest, credited the god Hermes with its invention: he allegedly took pity on his son Pan, who was pining for Echo but unable to seduce her, and taught him the trick of masturbation in order to relieve his suffering. Pan in his turn taught the habit to young shepherds.<sup>[93]</sup>

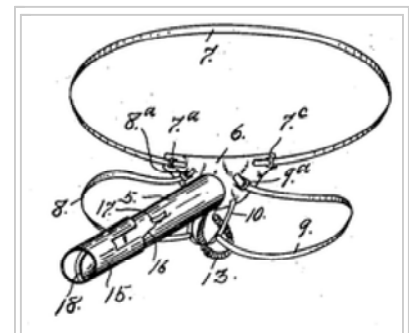
As late as the seventeenth century in Europe the practice was commonly employed by nannies to put their young male charges to sleep.<sup>[94]</sup> That tolerance was soon to change. The first use of the word "onanism" to consistently and specifically refer to masturbation appears to be *Onania*, an anonymous book first distributed in London in 1716. It drew on familiar themes of sin and vice, this time in particular against the "heinous sin" of "self-pollution". After dire warnings that those who so indulged would suffer impotence, gonorrhea, epilepsy and a wasting of the faculties (included were letters and testimonials supposedly from young men ill and dying from the effects of compulsive masturbation), the pamphlet then goes on to recommend as an effective remedy a "Strengthening Tincture" at 10 shillings a bottle and a "Prolific Powder" at 12 shillings a bag, available from a local shop.

One of the many horrified by the descriptions of malady in *Onania* was the notable Swiss physician Samuel-Auguste Tissot. In 1760, he published *L'Onanisme*, his own comprehensive medical treatise on the purported ill-effects of masturbation. Citing case studies of young male masturbators amongst his patients in Lausanne, Switzerland as basis for his reasoning, Tissot argued that semen was an "essential oil" and "stimulus" that, when lost from the body in great amounts, would cause "a perceptible reduction of strength, of memory and even of reason; blurred vision, all the nervous disorders, all types of gout and rheumatism, weakening of the organs of generation, blood in the urine, disturbance of the appetite, headaches and a great number of other disorders."

Though Tissot's ideas are now considered conjectural at best, his treatise was presented as a scholarly, scientific work in a time when experimental physiology was practically nonexistent. The authority with which the work was subsequently treated – Tissot's arguments were even acknowledged and echoed by luminaries such as Kant and Voltaire – arguably shifted the view of masturbation in Western medicine over the next two centuries into that of a debilitating illness.

This view persisted well into the Victorian era, where such medical censure of masturbation was in line with the widespread social conservatism and opposition to open sexual behavior common at the time.<sup>[95][96]</sup> There were recommendations to have boys' pants constructed so that the genitals could not be touched through the pockets, for schoolchildren to be seated at special desks to prevent their crossing their legs in class and for girls to be forbidden from riding horses and bicycles because the sensations these activities produce were considered too similar to masturbation. Boys and young men who nevertheless continued to indulge in the practice were branded as "weak-minded."<sup>[97]</sup> Many "remedies" were devised, including eating a bland, meatless diet. This approach was promoted by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (inventor of corn flakes) and Rev. Sylvester Graham (inventor of Graham crackers). The medical literature of the times describes procedures for electric shock treatment, infibulation, restraining devices like chastity belts and straitjackets, cauterization or – as a last resort – wholesale surgical excision of the genitals. Routine neonatal circumcision was widely adopted in the United States and the UK at least partly because of its believed preventive effect against masturbation (see also History of male circumcision). In later decades, the more drastic of these measures were increasingly replaced with psychological techniques, such as warnings that masturbation led to blindness, hairy hands or stunted growth. Some of these persist as myths even today. Ollendick and Schroeder stated: "These are some of the darkest pages of religious and medical history."<sup>[33]</sup>

At the same time, the supposed medical condition of hysteria—from the Greek *hystera* or uterus—was being treated by what would now be described as medically administered or medically prescribed masturbation for women. Techniques included use of the earliest vibrators and rubbing the genitals with placebo creams.<sup>[98]</sup>



A patented device designed to prevent masturbation by inflicting electric shocks upon the perpetrator, by ringing an alarm bell, and through spikes at the inner edge of the tube into which the penis is inserted. The entire patent document: Page 1, 2, 3, 4.

Medical attitudes toward masturbation began to change at the beginning of the 20th century when H. Havelock Ellis, in his seminal 1897 work *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, questioned Tissot's premises, cheerfully named famous men of the era who masturbated and then set out to disprove (with the work of more recent physicians) each of the claimed diseases of which masturbation was purportedly the cause. "We reach the conclusion", he wrote, "that in the case of moderate masturbation in healthy, well-born individuals, no seriously pernicious results necessarily follow."

Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of The Scout Association, incorporated a passage in the 1914 edition of *Scouting for Boys* warning against the dangers of masturbation. This passage stated that the individual should run away from the temptation by performing physical activity which was supposed to tire the individual so that masturbation could not be performed. By 1930, however, Dr. F. W. W. Griffin, editor of *The Scouter*, had written in a book for Rover Scouts that the temptation to masturbate was "a quite natural stage of development" and, citing Ellis' work, held that "the effort to achieve complete abstinence was a very serious error."

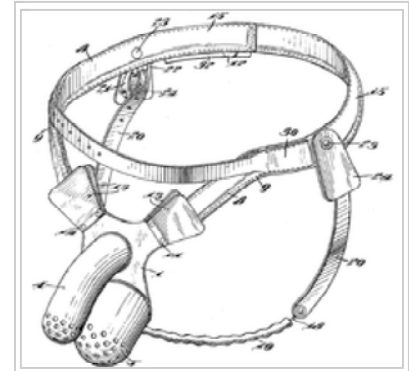


Image of a chastity belt from a patent document. For entire document, see: Page 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich in his 1922 essay *Concerning Specific Forms of Masturbation* tried to identify healthy and unhealthy forms of masturbation. He tried to relate the way people masturbated to their degree of inclination towards the opposite sex and to their psycho-sexual pathologies. Masturbation by men was at one time believed to cause homosexuality.<sup>[99]</sup>

The works of Sexologist Alfred Kinsey during the 1940s and 1950s said that masturbation was an instinctive behavior for both males and females, citing the results of Gallup Poll surveys indicating how common it was in the United States. Some critics of this theory held that his research was biased and that the Gallup Poll method was redundant for defining "natural behavior".

Thomas Szasz states the shift in scientific consensus<sup>[48][49][100]</sup> as "Masturbation: the primary sexual activity of mankind. In the nineteenth century it was a disease; in the twentieth, it's a cure."<sup>[50]</sup>

In 1994, when the Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, mentioned as an aside that it should be mentioned in school curricula that masturbation was safe and healthy, she was forced to resign,<sup>[101]</sup> with opponents asserting that she was promoting the teaching of *how* to masturbate. Many believe this was the result of her long history of promoting controversial viewpoints and not due solely to her public mention of masturbation.

## Stigma

Even though many medical professionals and scientists have found large amounts of evidence that masturbating is healthy<sup>[47][50][51][52][53][54][56][57]</sup> and commonly practiced by males and females, stigma on the topic still persists today. In November 2013, Matthew Burdette, after being filmed masturbating, committed suicide.<sup>[102][103][104]</sup>

Proving that these ancient stigmas against masturbation are still alive and felt by women and men, researchers in 1994 found that half of the adult women and men who masturbate feel guilty about it (Laumann, et al., 1994 , 85). Another study in 2000 found that adolescent young men are still frequently afraid to admit that they masturbate (Halpern, et al., 2000, 327).<sup>[105]</sup>

— Planned Parenthood, Masturbation—From Stigma to Sexual Health

## Religious views

Religions vary broadly in their views of masturbation, from considering it completely impermissible (as in Roman

Catholicism)<sup>[106]</sup> to encouraging and refining it (see, for example Neotantra and Taoist sexual practices).

## Philosophical arguments

Immanuel Kant regarded masturbation as a violation of the moral law. In *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), he made the *a posteriori* argument that "such an unnatural use of one's sexual attribute" strikes "everyone upon his thinking of it" as "a violation of one's duty to himself", and suggested that it was regarded as immoral even to give it its proper name (unlike the case of the similarly undutiful act of suicide). He went on, however, to acknowledge that "it is not so easy to produce a rational demonstration of the inadmissibility of that unnatural use", but ultimately concluded that its immorality lay in the fact that "a man gives up his personality ... when he uses himself merely as a means for the gratification of an animal drive".<sup>[107]</sup>

Subsequent critics of masturbation tended to argue against it on more physiological grounds, however.

## Law

The prosecution of masturbation has varied at different times, from virtually unlimited acceptance to complete illegality. In a 17th-century law code for the Puritan colony of New Haven, Connecticut "blasphemers, homosexuals and masturbators" were eligible for the death penalty.<sup>[108]</sup>

Often, masturbation in the sight of others is prosecuted under a general law such as public indecency, though some laws make specific mention of masturbation. In the UK, masturbating in public is illegal under Section 28 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847. The penalty may be up to 14 days in prison, depending on a range of circumstantial factors.<sup>[109]</sup> In the US, laws vary from state to state. In 2010, the Supreme Court of Alabama upheld a state law criminalizing the distribution of sex-toys.<sup>[110]</sup> In the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, masturbating in public is a class 3 misdemeanour.<sup>[109]</sup> In 2013, a man found masturbating openly on a beach in Sweden was cleared of charges of sexual assault, the court finding that his activities had not been directed towards any specific person.<sup>[111]</sup>

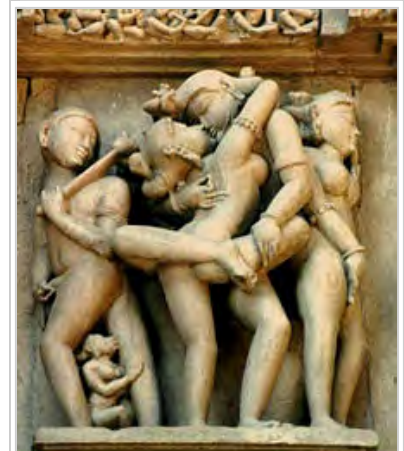
In many jurisdictions, masturbation by one person of another is considered digital penetration which may be illegal in some cases, such as when the other person is a minor.

There is debate whether masturbation should be promoted in correctional institutions. Restrictions on pornography, used to accompany masturbation, are common in American correctional facilities. Connecticut Department of Corrections officials say that these restrictions are intended to avoid a hostile work environment for correctional officers.<sup>[112]</sup> Other researchers argue allowing masturbation could help prisoners restrict their sexual urges to their imaginations rather than engaging in prison rape or other non-masturbatory sexual activity that could pose sexually transmitted disease or other health risks.<sup>[113]</sup>

## Cultural views and practices

### Sperm donation

Male masturbation may be used as a method to obtain semen for third party reproductive procedures such as artificial insemination and *in vitro* fertilisation which may involve the use of either partner or donor sperm.<sup>[114][115]</sup>



A temple relief at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, India features a couple in a sexual embrace with a man and a woman masturbating to either side

At a sperm bank or fertility clinic, a special room or cabin may be set aside so that semen may be produced by male masturbation for use in fertility treatments such as artificial insemination. Most semen used for sperm donation, and all semen donated through a sperm bank by sperm donors, is produced in this way. The facility at a sperm bank used for this purpose is known as a masturbatorium (US) or men's production room (UK). A bed or couch is usually provided for the man, and pornographic films or other material may be made available.<sup>[116]</sup>

## Encouraged masturbation

In the UK in 2009, a leaflet was issued by the National Health Service in Sheffield carrying the slogan, "an orgasm a day keeps the doctor away". It also says: "Health promotion experts advocate five portions of fruit and veg a day and 30 minutes' physical activity three times a week. What about sex or masturbation twice a week?" This leaflet has been circulated to parents, teachers and youth workers and is meant to update sex education by telling older school students about the benefits of enjoyable sex. Its authors have said that for too long, experts have concentrated on the need for "safe sex" and committed relationships while ignoring the principal reason that many people have sex. The leaflet is entitled *Pleasure*. Instead of promoting teenage sex, it could encourage young people to delay losing their virginity until they are certain they will enjoy the experience, said one of its authors.<sup>[117][118]</sup>

The Spanish region of Extremadura launched a programme in 2009 to encourage "sexual self-exploration and the discovery of self-pleasure" in people aged from 14 to 17. The €14,000 campaign includes leaflets, flyers, a "fanzine", and workshops for the young in which they receive instruction on masturbation techniques along with advice on contraception and self-respect. The initiative, whose slogan is, "Pleasure is in your own hands" has angered local right-wing politicians and challenged traditional Roman Catholic views. Officials from the neighbouring region of Andalucia have expressed an interest in copying the programme.<sup>[119]</sup>

The text book *Palliative care nursing: quality care to the end of life* states, "Terminally ill people are likely no different from the general population regarding their masturbation habits. Palliative care practitioners should routinely ask their patients if anything interferes in their ability to masturbate and then work with the patient to correct the problem if it is identified."<sup>[120]</sup>

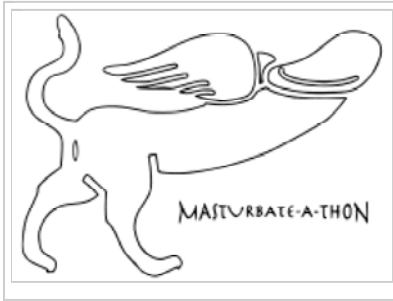
## Rites of passage

The Sambia tribe of New Guinea has rituals and rites of passage surrounding manhood which lasts several years and involves ejaculation through fellatio often several times a day. Semen is valued and masturbation is seen as a waste of semen and is therefore frowned upon even though frequent ejaculation is encouraged. The capacity and need to ejaculate is developed or nurtured for years from an early age but through fellatio so that it can be consumed rather than wasted. Semen is ingested for strength and is considered in the same line as mothers' milk.<sup>[121]</sup>

Other cultures have rites of passage into manhood that culminate in the first ejaculation of a male, usually by the hands of a tribal elder. In some tribes such as the Agta, Philippines, stimulation of the genitals is encouraged from an early age.<sup>[122]</sup> Upon puberty, the young male is then paired off with a "wise elder" or "witch doctor" who uses masturbation to build his ability to ejaculate in preparation for a ceremony. The ceremony culminates in a public ejaculation before a celebration. The ejaculate is saved in a wad of animal skin and worn later to help conceive children. In this and other tribes, the measure of manhood is actually associated more with the amount of ejaculate and his need than penis size.

## Masturbate-a-thon

Masturbation marathons are global events that provide a supportive, encouraging environment where masturbation can be performed openly among young and old without embarrassment. Participants may speak openly with onlookers while masturbating to share techniques and describe the pleasure and benefits.<sup>[123]</sup> Masturbate-a-thons are often charity events that are "intended to encourage people to explore safer sex, talk about masturbation and lift the taboos that still surround the subject." May is considered "Masturbation Month" by sex-positive organizations and activists, including Betty Dodson, Joani Blank, Susan Block, and Carol Queen.



## Popular culture

### Paintings and drawings

There are depictions of male masturbation in prehistoric rock paintings around the world. Most early people seem to have connected human sexuality with abundance in nature. A clay figurine of the 4th millennium BC from a temple site on

the island of Malta depicts a woman masturbating.<sup>[124]</sup> However, in the ancient world depictions of male masturbation are far more common.

### Music

In popular music, there are several notable songs that deal with masturbation. Some of the earliest examples are "My Ding-a-Ling" by Chuck Berry and "Mary Ann with the Shaky Hand" and "Pictures of Lily" by The Who.<sup>[125]</sup>

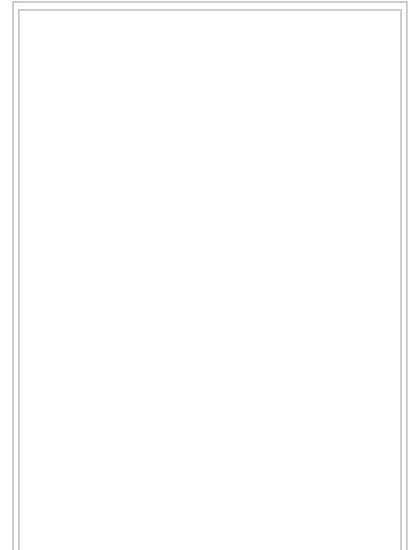
More recent popular songs include "Rosie" by Jackson Browne, "I Touch Myself" by the Divinyls, "Very Busy People" by The Limousines, "Dancing With Myself" by Billy Idol, "Everyday I Die" by Gary Numan, "You're Makin' Me High" by Toni Braxton, "Holding My Own" by The Darkness, "Vibe On" by Dannii Minogue, "Touch of My Hand" by Britney Spears, "Orgasm Addict" by the Buzzcocks, "Captain Jack" by Billy Joel, "Longview" by Green Day, "M+Ms" by Blink-182, "Wow, I Can Get Sexual Too" by Say Anything, "Fingers" and "U + Ur Hand" by P!nk,<sup>[126]</sup> "So Happy I Could Die" by Lady Gaga, "Masturbating Jimmy" by The Tiger Lillies, "When Life Gets Boring " by Gob, "Get a Grip" by Semisonic, and "Darling Nikki" by Prince. The 1983 recording "She Bop" by Cyndi Lauper, was one of the first fifteen songs ever required to carry Parental Advisory sticker for sexual content.<sup>[127]</sup> In a 1993 interview on *The Howard Stern Show*, Lauper claimed she recorded the vocal track in the nude.<sup>[128]</sup> Some<sup>[129]</sup> have argued that Billy Joel's song "The Stranger" is about masturbation. The song "Masturbates" by rock group Mindless Self Indulgence also deals with the concept of auto-erotic activity in a punk framework.

### Literature

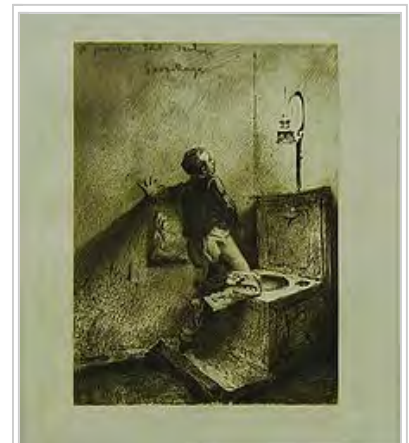
The 1858 schoolboys' novel *Eric, or, Little by Little* was a tract against masturbation, but did not mention the subject except extremely obliquely as "Kibroth-Hattaavah" a place mentioned in the Old Testament where those that lusted after meat were buried.

In October 1972, an important censorship case was held in Australia, leading to the banning of Philip Roth's novel *Portnoy's Complaint* in that country due to its masturbation references. The censorship led to public outcry at the time.<sup>[130]</sup>

Further portrayals and references to masturbation have occurred throughout literature, and the practice itself has even contributed to the production of literature among certain writers, such as Wolfe, Balzac, Flaubert and John Cheever.<sup>[131]</sup> Perhaps the most famous fictional depiction of masturbation occurs in the "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses* by James Joyce. Here the novel's protagonist Bloom brings himself to covert climax during a public fireworks display after being aroused by a young woman's coy exhibitionism.



Religious ecstasy illustrated as masturbation by Félicien Rops (1833–1898)



Masturbation, 1911, copper engraving by Mihály Zichy

## Television

In the *Seinfeld* episode "The Contest",<sup>[132]</sup> the show's main characters enter into a contest to see who can go the longest without masturbating. Because *Seinfeld*'s network, NBC, did not think masturbation was a suitable topic for prime time television, the word is never used. Instead, the subject is described using a series of euphemisms. "Master of my domain" became a part of the American lexicon from this episode.

Another NBC show, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, had a character known as the Masturbating Bear, a costume of a bear with a diaper covering its genitals. The Masturbating Bear would touch his diaper to simulate masturbation. Prior to leaving *Late Night* to become host of *The Tonight Show*, Conan O'Brien originally retired the character due to concerns about its appropriateness in an earlier time slot.<sup>[133]</sup> The Masturbating Bear however made his *Tonight Show* debut during the final days of Conan O'Brien's tenure as host of the *Tonight Show*. It was clear by then that Conan O'Brien was being removed from the show and he spent his last shows pushing the envelope with skits that typically would not be appropriate for the *Tonight Show*, one of which was the Masturbating Bear.<sup>[134]</sup> After much debate on whether or not he would be able to be used on Conan O'Brien's new TBS show, *Conan*, the Masturbating Bear made an appearance on the very first episode.<sup>[135]</sup>



Political Masturbation on Mass Media and Television, by Danny Sillada, 2009

In March 2007 the UK broadcaster Channel 4 was to air a season of television programmes about masturbation, called Wank Week. (*Wank* is a Britishism for *masturbate*.) The series came under public attack from senior television figures, and was pulled amid claims of declining editorial standards and controversy over the channel's public service broadcasting credentials. However, its constituent films may yet be shown by the channel at a later date.<sup>[136]</sup>

## Pornography

Depictions of male and female masturbation are common in pornography, including gay pornography. *Am Abend* (1910), one of the earliest pornographic films that have been collected at the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction,<sup>[137][138]</sup> starts with a female masturbation scene. Solo performances in gay pornography have been described in 1985 as "either or both active (tense, upright) and/or passive (supine, exposed, languid, available)", whereas female solo performances are said to be "exclusively passive (supine, spread, seated, squatted, orifices offered, etc.)".<sup>[139]</sup> Solo pornography recognized with AVN Awards include the *All Alone* series<sup>[140]</sup> and *All Natural: Glamour Solos*.<sup>[141]</sup>

## Other animals

Masturbatory behavior has been documented in a very wide range of species. Individuals of some species have been known to create tools for masturbation purposes.<sup>[6]</sup>

## See also

- Adult video arcade
- Autoeroticism
- Cum shot
- Die große Nacht im Eimer
- Handjob
- Jugum penis, archaic anti-masturbation device
- National Masturbation Day
- Nocturnal emission
- Orgasm control
- Phone sex
- Self-love
- Sex doll
- Sex magic
- Venus Butterfly

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- See here [1] (<https://books.google.com/books?id=6qNCeI2AcY4C&pg=PT11&lpg=PT11>) and pages 47–49 ([https://books.google.com/books?id=pXXZn\\_qSoDoC&pg=PA48](https://books.google.com/books?id=pXXZn_qSoDoC&pg=PA48)) for views on what constitutes virginity loss and therefore sexual intercourse or other sexual activity; source discusses how gay and lesbian individuals define virginity loss, and how the majority of researchers and heterosexuals define virginity loss/"technical virginity" by whether or not a person has engaged in penile-vaginal sex. Laura M. Carpenter (2005). *Virginity Lost: An Intimate Portrait of First Sexual Experiences*. NYU Press. pp. 295 pages. ISBN 0-8147-1652-0. Retrieved 9 October 2011.
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The collection concludes with two surveys among US college students. The first of these was based on limited quantitative questions relating to masturbation. The findings suggest that masturbation is not a substitute for sexual intercourse, as has often been posited, but is associated with increased sexual interest and greater number of partners. The second of these surveys asks whether masturbation could be useful in treating low sexual desire, by examining the relationship between masturbation, libido and sexual fantasy."

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## External links

- The dictionary definition of onanism at Wiktionary
- "Masturbating may protect against prostate cancer". *New Scientist*. 16 July 2003.
- "Masturbation could bring hay fever relief for men". *New Scientist*. April 2009.
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