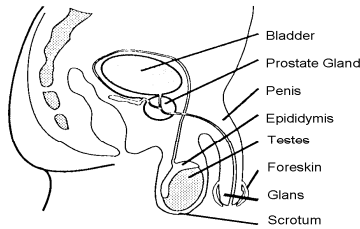


# What's Going On Down There?

## MALE SEXUAL RESPONSE



How a man responds sexually, depends on a number of factors which may include his:

- health
- past experiences
- attitudes related to sexuality
- relationship with his partner

As a man you can learn a great deal about your body and its sexual response by taking the time to explore how you respond to various kinds of touch and stimulation. Trust your feelings. Having too many expectations about how you **should** feel may prevent you from being aware of how you actually do feel. Paying close attention to your feelings and sensations can help you talk to your partner and possibly increase sexual enjoyment for both of you.

### What is male sexual response?

Sexual response in men generally follows a fairly consistent pattern, which may vary from person to person and in the same person depending on whom he is with, the situation he is in and what else is going on in his life. The physical part of sex cannot be separated from thoughts, feelings, and reactions. For men, a sexual response occurs when there is some form of sexual stimulation, which can include touch, smell, looking at someone or something, a thought or fantasy that provokes certain physical changes to start happening.

With sexual stimulation, the penis will become larger and begin to get hard. When the penis is in its soft state, there is an equal amount of blood coming in and going out through the blood vessels (arteries and veins) in the penis. During arousal and stimulation, more blood is pumped into the penis and the outflow of blood is reduced. The result is that the spongy tissue in the penis fills with blood and the penis gets larger and harder. This is referred to as an erection. Full erection (getting hard) may occur quite quickly, especially in young men. For others, it may take a longer period of time to get hard or take more direct stimulation of the penis ( e.g. touching, body rubbing, or oral sex) to reach full erection.

Other body changes that happen during male sexual response are an increase in the size of the testes (balls) and they are pulled upwards with the scrotum (sac). There is increased muscle tension throughout the body as sexual excitement builds. Sometimes the nipples become hard (erect) or a man may notice a sex flush, or reddening of the skin. During periods of sexual excitement a person's blood pressure, heart rate and breathing rate tend to increase.

For men, there is a point where they know for sure they are going to have an orgasm – a 2 or 3 second feeling of a “point of no return”. Muscles contract and feelings are very intense and pleasurable. Ejaculation (coming) occurs at the point of orgasm when the penis releases semen. Ejaculation may be experienced as a series of contractions and spasms in the legs, stomach, arms and back as well as the

penis. Semen is pushed through the penis by contractions and may spurt or ooze out. Ejaculations and orgasms will vary from man to man and from time to time. Orgasm/ejaculation is followed by a period of relaxation called the refractory period. During this period, the penis usually becomes softer and it is unlikely that the man will have another erection or orgasm. The length of time it takes for a man to get another erection varies, depending on the individual and the situation. In younger men the refractory period may last only a few minutes, while in older men it may last a few hours or more.

### **Things that can affect sexual response:**

A man's sexual response is very much connected to his feelings about himself, his partner and the situation in which sexual feelings are shown. Acknowledging these feelings, and talking openly about any concerns with his partner, can often improve sexual responsiveness.

Negative experiences related to sexuality, such as sexual assault, sexual abuse, fear of pregnancy or fear of contracting a sexually transmitted infection, can influence a man's sexual response. Sometimes people have negative associations to certain smells, sounds or situations based on these negative experiences that can affect their sexual desire.

Fatigue and stress can affect desire and sexual response. Lifestyles that involve fulfilling multiple roles such as employee, parent, homemaker and sexual partner, may result in fatigue and low interest in sexual activity. Couples may need to look for ways to arrange their lives so that time and energy are available for satisfying sexual interactions.

The size of a man's penis is of little importance where sexual response is concerned. Even though the size of the soft (flaccid) penis varies from man to man, there is often little difference in the size of the erect penis.

Occasional impotence (an inability to obtain or maintain an erection) is normal in all men. This may be especially true if he is overly tired, under a large amount of stress, or drinking alcohol. In the rush and stress of modern life, the pressure to perform may affect a man's sexual life. Some men feel inadequate if they cannot become erect on demand and maintain an erection for long periods of time – this is referred to as 'performance anxiety'. Worrying less about 'performance' and more about finding ways to give and receive love and pleasure can greatly enhance the sexual responsiveness for both partners. Men don't need to 'come' every time they engage in sexual activity in order to be sexually responsive. Men can be marvellously sexual even without having an erection.

Occasional premature ejaculation (reaching orgasm too quickly) is very common, especially when a man is overly excited or particularly anxious. Men can learn to slow down and explore other ways to be sexual beyond sexual intercourse. Many men enjoy touching, speaking, listening, seeing and smelling in addition to sexual intercourse. They can learn to cuddle and stroke and how to become more comfortable with being cuddled and stroked. Over time, many men discover that they can develop some control over how quickly things move from arousal to orgasm – this can be a pleasing and exciting time for both partners.

Difficulties with sexual response can be troubling for a man – and his partner too. If you are having difficulties in the way you respond sexually, talk the matter over with your doctor or a qualified counsellor. In most cases, both the man and his partner can benefit from counselling because this type of concern affects them both. Many difficulties can be resolved if both partners are willing to participate fully, and learn from and care for each other.

Adapted from: Calgary Health Region Learning and Development

<http://www.healthlinkalberta.ca/Topic.asp?GUID={75BF4F22-C708-4E58-870E-9B74FBC4F259}>

[http://www.2.huberlin.de/sexology/ATLAS\\_EN/html/male\\_sexual\\_response.html](http://www.2.huberlin.de/sexology/ATLAS_EN/html/male_sexual_response.html)



	AGE 18	AGE 35	AGE 55	AGE 75
<b>Erection</b>	Springs up constantly, whether you want it to or not.	Works like you want it to, with occasional lapses in judgment or function.	Half of men have some erectile dysfunction (hard-on problems). Also the angle of your dangle changes; over time your erection sinks groundward.	More hands-on stimulation is needed, and your erection gets softer.
<b>Ejaculation and orgasm</b>	Like an automatic weapon with a hair trigger. 20% of men Kinsey studied could have orgasms in rapid succession.	Multiple orgasm are within your reach, but unless you're among the lucky 8% who can come repeatedly, it will take some training.	The size of your ejaculation shrinks, and the amount of time you require between orgasms increases. Your control, though, and knowledge of pleasure is probably peaking.	Same as 55 if you're lucky. If you've had surgery for prostate enlargement, which many at this age have, you may experience "retrograde ejaculation", where your cum goes into your bladder instead of out your penis. If you've had a prostatectomy, orgasm is strictly internal.

Adapted from: Wolfe, Daniel (ed.). (2000). Men Like Us: The GMHC Complete Guide to Gay Men's Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Well-Being. New York: Ballantine Books.  
 (No! Just because you want to know what's going on down there as you age, does not make you gay).

# What else is happening down there?

Men who rest laptop computers in their laps could be risking their fertility, a US study warns. Heat from the processor can cause the temperature of the testes to rise almost three degrees, more than enough to damage sperm, the research reveals.<sup>1</sup>

An orgasm is considered a good way to stimulate the prostate gland in men, reducing the incidence of prostate infections.<sup>2</sup>

A testicle is about 4.5cm long, and 2.5 cm in breadth, and weighs 10.5 to 14 grams.<sup>2</sup>

The prostate gland weighs about 8 grams.<sup>2</sup>

To "testify" was based on men in the Roman court swearing to a statement made by swearing on their testicles.<sup>2</sup>

A testicle is made up of 400-600 "tubules", each tubule is between 70cm and 80cm long . . . stretched out that's between 280 and 480 metres.<sup>2</sup>

Excessive cycling can cause temporary – and sometimes permanent – ED. Many case reports published in the literature describe long distance cyclists developing impotence. Researchers have seen a marked decline in penile oxygen tension and cavernosal arterial flow in health subjects after cycling.  
*Do yourself a favour and invest in a men's bicycle seat.*

Sources:  
1 – "Doctors warn young men: Get the laptop off your lap", Globe and Mail, December 9, 2004  
2 – "Facts for Guys!" *Instructions for Vertical Urination: a young men's guyde, A special edition of tiny giant magazine*, winter 2002/2003, Volume 63, Number 1.