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IS IT BETTER FOR HER? THE LATEST SCIENCE ON THE FEMALE ORGASM



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By Beatrice Wagner
DIE WELT/Worldcrunch

BERLIN - Inner tension mounts. Heart rate increases, breathing is faster, small body hairs stand on end. Sudden muscle contractions, spasms, indescribable feelings of pleasure: an orgasm, over relatively quickly for men but sometimes lasting up to 30 seconds for [women](#).

Along with intense feelings of release following an orgasm, come feelings of happiness and blissful exhaustion. Some couples laugh with joy, and this is the moment for whispering, "I love you."

The main reason this [sexual experience](#) is sought over and over again is that it is such fun.

And as far as men go it serves a clear-cut purpose: as American neuro-psychiatrist Louann Brizendine writes in her book *The Female Brain*, the more often a man sows his seed, the greater the chance of passing down his genes to future generations.

So why is there be such a thing as a female orgasm? Women can after all conceive without one. Gynecologist Johannes Huber, a specialist in reproductive medicine speaking at a conference on [sexuality](#) in Salzburg, says that female orgasm is helpful to conception. With researchers at the

University of Vienna, he has shown that female orgasms lead to the release of high amounts of the neurotransmitter oxytocin.

Getting these results "wasn't so easy," he explains. "The molecule has a half life period of only a few minutes. So within a two-minute time frame we needed to take blood from a post-orgasmic female subject and centrifuge and deep-freeze it to get reliable measurement results." In doing so, the researchers were able to establish what role oxytocin plays with regard to [orgasm](#).

For one thing, the neurotransmitter effects muscle contractibility on the pelvic floor. For another, large amounts of oxytocin increase concentration of the luteinizing hormone (LH) that causes ovulation. "When a woman near ovulation has an orgasm it triggers ovulation. So female orgasm is helpful to conception," Dr. Huber says.

Who needs love when you have oxytocin?

Another main function of the female orgasm is to help "the couple feel a lasting bond." Today, in our relatively secure world, a woman can [raise a child](#) without the presence of a father, Dr. Huber says, but in Stone Age conditions a pregnant single woman or a single mom didn't stand much chance of survival.

Hence, according to this theory, orgasm causes bonding hormones to be released. One of these is oxytocin, a real multi-talent among hormones and sometimes referred to as the "trust hormone." It's considered an anti-stress hormone that makes bonding as a couple easier for both men and women.

"Oxytocin contributes to strong social bonding," confirms Wolfgang Maier, Director of the Clinic and Polyclinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at Bonn's University Hospital. He was one of the scientists who took part in a study recently published in the Journal of Neuroscience confirming the role of the "trust hormone" in male [flirtation activity](#).

But does the orgasm hormone also play a role in creating *lasting* bonds among partners? Yes, according to the scientists – because another hormone, prolactin, is also released through orgasm. Prolactin is what lies behind feelings of sexual satisfaction. It's what makes men fall asleep after sex, and women want to cuddle. "Prolactin also stimulates neurogenesis –the process by which neurons are generated," says Dr. Huber.

The fact that emotional conditions can cause neuronal change was demonstrated by Psychologist Louis Cozolino. Dr. Huber says that, "when two partners are faithful to each other, and regularly experience orgasmic sex, the brain learns to link these pleasant conditions to the specific partner." Hence, good orgasms are the neuroendocrinological prerequisite for a lasting partnership.

In addition to the relevant hormones, anatomy also plays a role in whether or not a woman achieves [orgasm](#). The distance between the clitoris and vagina is crucial – should it be too great, the clitoris may be too little stimulated during sex.

The first scientifically documented operation undertaken to help improve a woman's ability to achieve orgasm had to do with shortening this distance. The procedure, known as the Halban-Narjan operation, was first performed on Princess Marie Bonaparte, as researchers report in the specialized journal "Hormones and Behavior." Marie Bonaparte is said to have been so happy with the final results she showed her gratefulness to the man who suggested the operation, Sigmund Freud, by helping him flee the Nazis.

Read the article in the original language.

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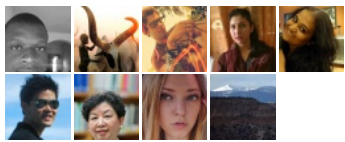
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