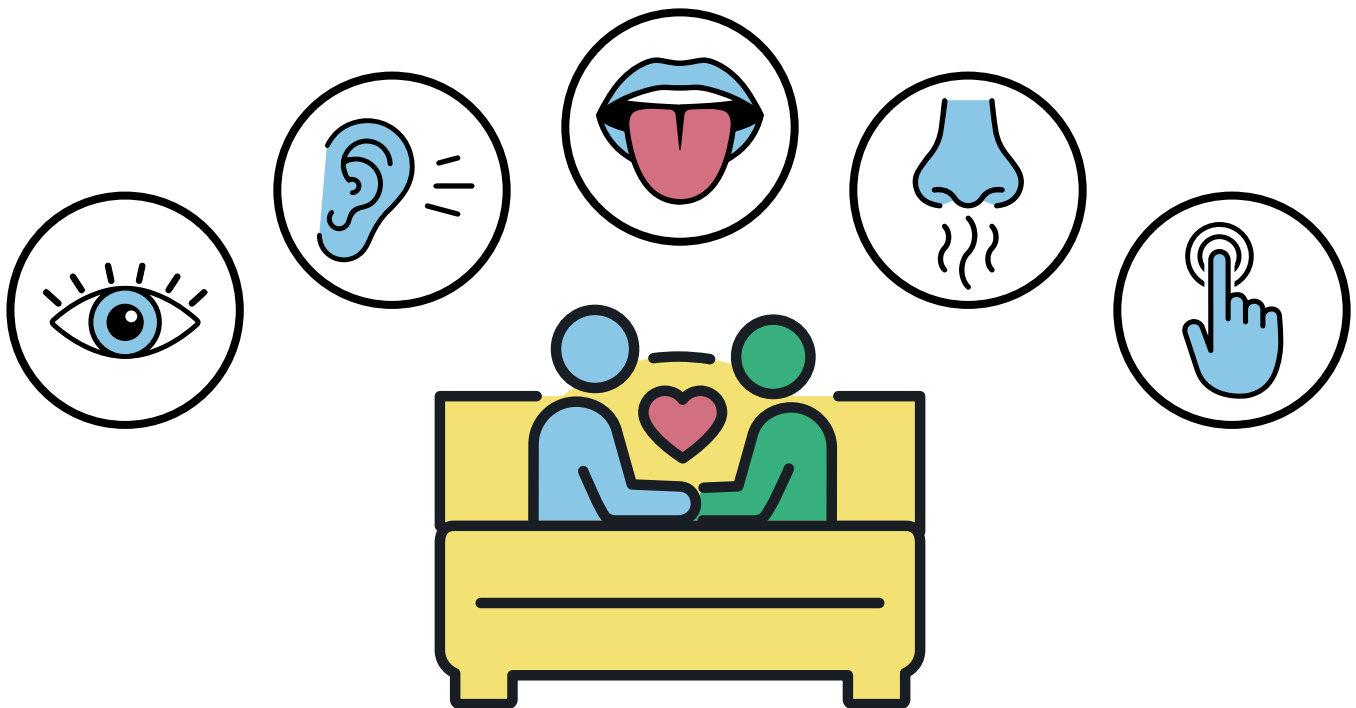


# Sensory sensitivities during sex



Sexual activity can include many sensations like touch, sounds, smells, tastes, and others. There are some sensations that you may like and other sensations that you may not like. This information sheet is about how you can have more of the sensations you like during sex and less of the sensations you do not like.



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## What is sexual activity (or “having sex”)?

Sexual activity can include many different things like touching your partner, masturbation, penis-vagina sex, penis-anal sex, oral sex, using sex toys, and more.

	<b>Masturbation</b>	When a person touches their own penis or vulva/vagina or anus (butthole) for sexual pleasure
	<b>Penis-vagina sex</b>	When one person's penis goes inside someone else's vagina
	<b>Penis-anal sex</b>	When one person's penis goes inside someone else's anus
	<b>Oral sex</b>	When one person puts their mouth on the penis, vagina, or anus of another person

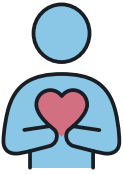
A person can have sex by themselves or with a partner or with more than one partner.

Sex can feel like a lot of different things – sometimes it feels good and sometimes it does not. Sometimes things feel good when you do it to yourself and sometimes it feels good when someone else does it to you.

**Sex is a process of learning about what you like so you can do more of the things that make you feel good.**

## What you can do to enjoy sex more

### Try different sensations by yourself or with a partner to figure out what you like and do not like



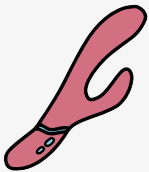
Touch different parts of your body. You can start with less intense sensations and slowly try out more intense ones. For example, start by touching your legs or feet before touching your penis, vulva/vagina, or anus.



Try out different touches, smells, sounds, visuals, and tastes.



Try out different body positions to see what you like or find comfortable.



Try different sex toys (make sure the toy you use is safe and meant to be used for sex).



Try different kinds of condoms and lubricants ('lube').



Check out the [Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\): Information Sheet](#) for more information about using condoms and lube.

## Have a plan for having sex with a partner or partners



Discuss with your partner about what you and your partner like or do not like. A supportive partner will listen and respect your desires and boundaries.



If you or your partner are not sure about what you like or do not like, take some time to try out different sensations to figure it out together or on your own.



Try to plan time for sexual activity when you are not overstimulated. For example, after you have some alone time or in the morning before you talk to anyone.



Have a plan for how you and your partner want to communicate with each other before, during, or after having sex.



Make sure that any sexual activity you do with a partner is consensual. This means that both you and your partner agree to do that sexual activity.



Check out the [\*\*Communicating Consent: Information Sheet\*\*](#) for more information about communicating consent for sexual activity.

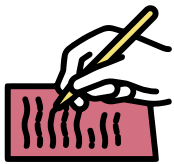
## Different ways to tell your partner something before, during, and after sex *without* talking:



Keep a notepad or a paper next to your bed. On the notepad you can write notes for your partner or have messages you can point to.



Type out what you need to say to your partner on a phone or computer or by using your augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device.



Make a yes/no/maybe list:

- For yes, write down the things you know you like.
- For no, write down the things you know you do not like.
- For maybe, write down the things you are not sure if you like, but want to try.

Remember, you can always say “no” to something you like if you are not in the mood for it. You can also choose to try something that you are not sure about and then choose to stop if you find out you do not like it.



Come up with a “safe word”, sound, or sign to mean “stop” with your partner.

A “safe word” is a word that you use to let your partner know that you want to stop the sexual activity.



Teach or show your partner how they can tell if you are overwhelmed or need a break and how to support you if you do get overwhelmed. For example, you may want your partner to give you some time alone to relax.

## Preventing overstimulation during sex alone or with a partner



### One sensation at a time

If you do not like to feel too many things at the same time, try to only stimulate one sense at a time:

- Touch one body part at a time.
- Tell your partner to not talk and touch you at the same time.



### Things you smell

- Taking a shower with your partner before having sex can help you both smell nice and feel excited.
- Do not use perfumes or creams with strong smells if you or your partner is sensitive to that.
- Find something that has a smell that you like to hide smells you do not like. For example, you can use lube that has a nice smell.



### Things you hear

- Put together a playlist of songs that you know well and like.
- Use noise-cancelling headphones.



### Things you touch

- Use bed sheets that you find comfortable.
- Wear clothing that you find comfortable.
- If you do not like the feeling of hair touching you, you can make a ponytail or shave/wax body hair.



### Things you see

- Do not look someone directly in their eyes if you do not like it.
- You can tell your partner not to make eye contact during sex.
- You can close your eyes during sex if you prefer.
- Turn off the lights if you are sensitive to light.

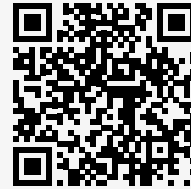
## Preventing overstimulation during sex alone or with a partner



### Things you taste

You can try flavoured condoms or dental dams for oral sex.

Check out the [Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\): Information Sheet](#) for more information about using condoms and dental dams.



### Temperature

Change room temperature to a temperature that you find comfortable

## Do not feel pressured to do anything that makes you uncomfortable!



It is important to want to make your partner happy, but it is also important that you are happy and that you feel good.



If you start to feel overwhelmed during sex, stop and take a break.



If you start to feel uncomfortable or if something hurts, tell your partner right away. You can come up with a sign with your partner that means “stop.” For example, raising your hand means that you want to stop.