

SEXUALITY Sexual organs

How big and long should the normal penis be?

Scientifically speaking, the penis should be long enough to reach into the vagina and deliver sperms into it. There is no relation between the size of the penis and the ability to produce sexual climax (orgasm) and satisfy one's partner.

At what age does penile erection start and till what age does it last?

Erection of the penis can occur even in childhood. Children often get penile erections during the passage of urine and stools. There are no sexual feelings underlying these erections. As pubertal changes start occurring the sex organs mature. The psychosexual maturation during adolescence can lead to penile erection associated with sexual arousal. Manual stimulation of the penis can result in erection. This capability is observed even in old age.

How long does the penis remain erect in sexual intercourse?

The penis becomes erect after sexual arousal and remains erect till the ejaculation of semen takes place. Its duration can vary in each intercourse as it depends on the time taken to reach the peak level of sexual stimulation in a male. However, in certain conditions there can be a failure to get an erection or to sustain it long enough (also called premature ejaculation). The failure to get penile erection may be due to certain organic diseases and psychological disturbances.

Does "curved" penis interfere with the ability to perform sex?

There is lot of individual variation in the shape i.e. the curve, size and length of the penis. However, it does not interfere with the ability to perform sexual intercourse. Normally, the penis is at an angle of 45 to 90 degrees to the body, which corresponds to the angle of the vagina. Very rarely, the penis may be severely curved due to certain disorders. Such conditions can be corrected surgically. These conditions being rare, one should not worry about the possibility of their presence in oneself. The shape of the penis does not affect sexual pleasure or reproductive capacity, as the vagina is an elastic organ.

Why does the penis stand erect during the early hours of morning?

When we sleep our level of consciousness passes through two phases, which are recognized by eye movements during sleep. These two physiological phases of sleep, which keep on alternating in cycles during the sleep are called rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep. We sleep fast and deep during NREM sleep. However, when we pass into the REM sleep, there is a bizarre activity in the brain. Generally, we tend to dream during this period. Sometimes, an individual is likely to have erotic dreams during the REM sleep. The penile erection may take place at that time. The penis is likely to become erect on five to six occasions during the sleep. If one wakes up during the REM sleep, he may find a coincident erection in the morning. At the same time, urine accumulates in the urinary bladder during night time and it presses over the prostate and seminal vesicles. This leads to a simultaneous increase in blood flow to the genital organs leading to erection. Penile erection during sleep is a normal, harmless phenomenon.

Are there any medicines to increase the duration of erection of the penis?

No scientifically proven medicine is available as yet. These sexual stimulants are also called 'Aphrodisiacs'. People have used many unproven, untested substances as aphrodisiacs in the past such as alcohol, marijuana, LSD, Spanish fly, horn of the Rhinoceros, Yohimbine etc. However, all them appear to "work" in people who believe it will work due to a commonly observed effect called the "placebo effect".

Why does bleeding occur during the first sexual intercourse? And, does it have any effect on the body?

Sometimes bleeding can occur in males as well as females when they are having sexual intercourse for the first time in their life. In males, the glans penis is covered by thin fold of skin called as foreskin or prepuce. The prepuce is connected to the penis by a skin fold called the frenulum. Few blood vessels pass through the frenulum. During the first sexual intercourse, the foreskin (prepuce) may get over-stretched and reach below the glans penis leading to the rupture of the frenulum. The ruptured frenulum causes bleeding. Usually it stops after pressing it for a few minutes and does not need any other medication.

In some females there may be a small amount of bleeding due to the rupture of the hymen during the first sexual intercourse. Normally this bleeding too does not require medical intervention. Most often the hymen may be already torn prior to a sexual experience in women who may be involved in physically active sports such as bicycle riding, diving etc. Hence, a torn hymen should not be equated with 'lost virginity' or prior sexual experience, as is traditionally presumed. Bleeding during the first sexual intercourse does not have any adverse effect on the body.

At what age does the penis become weak?

The penis can retain the ability to achieve erection even in old age. Certain diseases like long standing, uncontrolled diabetes, very high blood pressure, certain diseases of the spinal cord etc. can affect the erection of penis. By and large these diseases tend to occur in old age and one may associate this loss of ability with old age rather than the diseases.

Does repeated sexual intercourse lead to increase in the length of the penis?

Definitely not. Repeated sexual intercourse does not cause any increase in the size and/or length of the penis. Moreover the penis is made up of spongy tissue and not muscles.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of circumcision?

Circumcision is a procedure in which the foreskin of the penis (prepuce) is removed surgically. It has certain advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages of circumcision include :

- i. The smegma does not get collected under the prepuce and the glans remains clean and free of any offensive odour.
- ii. The chances of developing minute injuries to the foreskin are minimized. Scientific evidence indicates a lesser risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases including HIV infection amongst circumcised persons.
- iii. Some people believe that it reduces the prepuce sensations during sexual intercourse, and thereby delays ejaculation. However, sexologists differ on this issue.
- iv. Circumcision is necessary in some persons who cannot roll back the prepuce since childhood (also called phimosis) or due to certain local infections causing swelling of the genitals especially sexually transmitted diseases (also called paraphimosis)

Circumcision does not have any disadvantage. However, this minor surgical procedure should be performed under clean, hygienic conditions using adequately sterilized instruments to reduce the risk of acquiring secondary infections.

How does Viagra work and who should use it?

Viagra is a newly discovered drug which is used for people who are unable to have penile erection. It works through its active ingredient, sildenafil citrate, which enhances the effect of the chemical compound nitrous oxide. This compound increases blood flow to the penis and the nitrous oxide released causes penile erection. Viagra does not cause erection by itself, but it assists the body in attaining erection.

This drug is especially useful for patients who do not get penile erection due to conditions such as long-standing, uncontrolled diabetes, stress, alcoholism etc. However, this drug should be taken only in consultation with a physician. It is known to cause a side effect which alters the vision sometimes. Additionally, it causes headache, stuffy nose, loose motions and urinary tract infection. Though this drug is to be used for men alone, some drugs for a similar effect have been now developed for women and are undergoing trials.

Should one shave pubic hair periodically?

Overgrown pubic hair can create favourable conditions for development of fungal infections of the skin and also parasitic infestations. As drying of the skin becomes difficult in such situations, a foul odour can develop in this region. Hence, pubic hairs need to be trimmed regularly. The term shaving is purposefully avoided as some may try to shave it with a razor and injure themselves. If the hairs are trimmed too much, after a few days the person will get an itching sensation and will be uncomfortable. Instead, they should not be trimmed too short. The hairs that grow after trimming are a little thicker and coarser than the first growth. Though they may appear more dense after the re-growth, it does not mean that their numbers have increased. Care must be taken while trimming not to injure oneself as this might lead to development of skin and hair root infections, which can be painful. Both males and females must trim pubic hair periodically.

Nightfall and ejaculation

What do you mean by "wet dream"?

When a person is in deep sleep he sometimes gets erotic dreams as discussed earlier. These dreams lead to sexual arousal and may result in ejaculation of semen during the sleep itself. This process is called as a "wet dream". It is also called a "nightfall" or "dreamfall" in common language (parlance). Medically it is known as the "nocturnal emission".

What do you mean by ejaculation?

The term ejaculation indicates expulsion or discharge. Most often people use this term to describe the discharge of semen through the penis. Ejaculation is, generally, the end point of sexual intercourse. It occurs at the height of sexual stimulation. The semen accumulated in the seminal vesicles is discharged into the urethra where it gets mixed with prostatic secretions. Its expulsion through the urethra takes place due to a series of contractions of the perineal muscles (muscles at the floor of the pelvis or near the anal and genital opening). This entire process is called "ejaculation of the semen".

Where is semen produced?

Semen consists of sperms and seminal fluid. Every male has two testicles. After puberty sperms are continuously produced by these testicles. The production of semen is under the control of male sex hormones. During sexual intercourse millions of sperms and a small quantity of secretions from the seminal vesicles, prostate and Cowper's glands get mixed on their way out to form semen.

At what age does "nightfall" start and upto what age does it last?

This process starts at puberty and usually stops when a man gets married. After marriage, his sexual urge is satisfied by sexual intercourse. Hence nightfalls are uncommon at this stage of life. However they can occur at any age, especially when his partner is away and there is a long period of sexual abstinence. The nocturnal emission (nightfall) is a harmless bodily response.

Does semen gets exhausted after repeated ejaculations?

No. This is a wrong notion. The production of semen is a continuous process after puberty. This semen is discharged through sexual intercourse, by masturbation or during wet dreams (nocturnal emission)

The first couple of ejaculations will empty the stored semen having higher concentration of sperms. Subsequent ejaculations will, thus, contain lesser number of sperms and proteins, which make semen appear less viscid (thick). Repeated ejaculations in a short period tend to reduce the consistency of semen from thick to thin. Semen, after production, is stored in seminal vesicles. Therefore people fear that the semen has been completely exhausted. This is not correct. Generally, longer the interval in days between two ejaculations, the thicker is the semen.

Can repeated ejaculations cause any disease or deterioration of health?

This is one of the common myths about sexuality. Repeated ejaculations do not cause any adverse effect on the health of an individual. Some people wrongly believe that repeated ejaculations can reduce the capability of the body to fight against diseases. Germs, derangement in bodily functions (metabolism) or alterations in the immune system generally cause the diseases. Repeated ejaculations cannot result in any of these processes. Repeated ejaculations are not associated with any disease and do not result in deterioration of health.

Is there any treatment for "nightfalls" (nocturnal emissions)?

Nocturnal emissions do not cause any ill effect on health. They are likely to occur amongst males who are not indulging in any sexual relationship. Since this is a normal physiological process, it does not require any medical treatment. It occurs frequently during adolescence, when the person is undergoing various physical and psychological changes. Sometimes during erotic dream sequences, he is likely to see a known person or a relative as the sexual partner. This can lead to formation of guilt, which is reinforced by the lack of knowledge about nocturnal emissions. Besides, the perception of lack of self-control over these episodes may aggravate and produce depression. However, effective counseling is extremely useful in the management of the guilt and depression resulting from nocturnal emissions. Neither do nocturnal emissions require any medication for treatment, nor are there any medicines available for its management.

Are there any medicines to prevent nightfalls (nocturnal emissions)?

Nocturnal emission is a normal, physiological process related to human sexuality. It does not require any therapeutic (medicinal) intervention. There are no medicines available to prevent nocturnal emissions.

Does smoking or tobacco-chewing have any effect on nightfalls (nocturnal emissions)?

The addictions such as tobacco-chewing and smoking do not have any effect on nocturnal emissions. The frequency of nocturnal emissions does not depend on addiction to smoking or tobacco chewing. However, both these addictions have been scientifically shown to be associated with many other disease conditions in the body. Excessive smoking has been known to reduce the number of sperms in the semen.

Does the consumption of a "special tablet or chewing a special "Pan" increase semen production?

No. known medicine, herbs or remedy can increase semen production. However, the quantity of sperms in the semen can be reduced in severe psychological stress. If an individual believes that these tablets have magical powers to enhance the semen. (indirectly sperms) production, they may produce a "placebo effect" and show improvement. However, these so-called remedies do not have any organic effect. Therefore, one should not believe on its "magical effect" as portrayed in the advertisements about such sex tablets or pans.

Can regular physical exercise affect nightfalls (nocturnal emissions)?

Physical exercise, per se, is not related to nightfalls. These are two different aspects altogether. However, regular physical exercise can distract the attention of an adolescent from nightfalls, improve his self-esteem and help in coping with this psychological stress. Hence one may observe an accidental correlation between these two activities.

Are wet dreams and pimples related to one another?

Both wet dream and the development of pimples (acne) occur during adolescence. These two represent concurrent manifestations dependent on the peculiar psycho-physiological events occurring during this stage and do not have any physiological correlation with one another. There is, however, a tendency to presume that they are interrelated. The guilt associated with certain sexual activities like wet dreams and masturbation makes adolescents blame them for the disfiguring acne seen during this period.

Does nightfall have any effect on intellectual capacity?

Nightfall is a physiological process. It does not diminish the intellectual capacity or mental capability of the individual. The guilt associated with nightfalls can distract an individual however and the loss of concentration is likely to be attributed to it. This is purely psychological and can be corrected.

Do repeated nightfalls lead to acquisition of STDs or AIDS?

No. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and AIDS are infections which are passed from an infected person to another through sexual intercourse. Nightfalls have nothing to do with it. However, both nightfalls and risky sexual behaviour, which expose the person to STDs/HIV may be occurring coincidentally during the same period of adolescence. Therefore, people may wrongly associate these two as a cause and effect.

Does repeated nightfall affect reproduction or the newborn baby?

No. Repeated nightfalls do not affect a man's capability to reproduce or produce any harmful effect on the children born to him. Outcome-wise, there is no difference between repeated nightfalls and repeated sexual intercourse. In both the activities, semen ejaculated. Therefore, there is no rationale behind such a misbelief.

Is ejaculation possible without erection?

Ejaculation is an end point of sexual arousal in males, for which erection of the penis is a necessity. It cannot take place without erection.

Sometimes in old age, sperms tend to be seen in the urine. This condition is called 'spermatorrhoea'. It is related with control over the valves which regulate its flow in normal circumstances. These valves become lax in old age. Sometimes, small amounts of sperms are also seen in urine passed within a few hours of sexual intercourse. This is also a normal bodily event and does not need any treatment. However, both these conditions cannot be considered as ejaculation of semen without erection.

Do women have ejaculation and nightfall?

Even females secrete certain fluids during the height of sexual excitement (climax or orgasm). This may be considered as an equivalent of ejaculation in males, except for the fact that it does not occur in every sexual intercourse as it is related to the level of sexual arousal. Generally, this occurs when a woman is adequately sexually stimulated. Many times, the male may reach peak sexual stimulation and ejaculate semen before a woman reaches this level. In these circumstances, her level of stimulation will be lower.

Sometimes, females may also get erotic dreams in sleep and these vaginal secretions may be released. This may be compared to nightfalls amongst males. Neither women who get wet dreams, nor those who do not get it are abnormal. This is a normal phenomenon.

Is nightfall good or bad?

Nightfall is a normal, physiological phenomenon and a natural outlet for repressed sexual thoughts and feelings. It does not produce any adverse effect on the body. Moreover, there is no reason for one to feel guilty about the occurrence of nightfalls, Night falls can not be adjudged as good or bad.

How does semen smell?

The odour of semen can vary. Most often it might be fishy.

Masturbation

What is masturbation?

When an individual stimulates one's own sexual organs manually, it is called masturbation. In masturbation, sexual satisfaction is sought without any direct contact/entry of the penis into the vagina or anus (without "penetrative sex"). It is done either by hands or mechanical devices. When masturbation is performed by both the partners to one another by mutual manual stimulation, it is called 'mutual masturbation' (Petting). The person indulging in masturbation may fantasise that he or she is actually involved in a sex act with a partner of the opposite or same sex. Masturbation is common amongst teenagers and becomes rare after marriage.

When does one indulge in masturbation?

Adolescents are more likely to indulge in masturbation. The physical and psychological changes occurring during puberty result in development of curiosity to experience sexual intercourse. Masturbation is common in early puberty, when a sexual partner is not available for penetrative sex or when social customs do not permit sexual intercourse. Masturbation is also common, though transiently, in later life, when the sexual partner is physically away or is incapable of having sex due to illness. When the likelihood of availability of sexual partner for penetrative sex increases, this phenomenon is generally not seen.

Which physiological events occur during masturbation?

At puberty and adolescence there is a sudden spurt in the levels of sex hormones, which increase sexual feelings. Certain centres in the brain get stimulated in response to certain psychological and visual stimulation. At the same time, fondling one's own genital organs enhances these sexual feelings and sensations. Such events ultimately end in ejaculation of semen. Masturbation mimics sexual intercourse to some extent, though not completely. Masturbation does not have any adverse physical effect on the health of an individual.

How do males masturbate?

A male masturbates by handling his own penis and making physical movements similar to sexual intercourse, sometimes using an object like pillow or mattress. When two persons of opposite or same sex, fondle each other's genitalia and masturbate, the process is called "mutual masturbation".

How do women masturbate?

Women may masturbate by adopting different practices such as massaging vulva or clitoris, pressing their thighs together and shaking them vigorously, and by using pensi like objects etc.

Does masturbation lead to blood loss?

No. This is a widely prevalent misconception, often observed in the community. It is believed that semen is produced from blood in the body. Therefore, discharge of semen is equated with blood loss. However, this is scientifically incorrect. Even repeated masturbation does not lead to any blood loss or reduction in hemoglobin level in any individual.

Is masturbation harmful to health?

No. Traditionally, people believe that masturbation is harmful to the health of an individual. In fact, masturbation may be a developmental phenomenon amongst adolescents. According to reports of surveys on human sexual behavior world-wide, a majority of males report experience of masturbation at some time in their lives. There have been no adverse effects on the health of these people. Some people believe that it may affect the reproductive capabilities of these individuals. This is also incorrect. Sperms and semen are produced continuously in the body and stored in seminal vesicles. In the absence of masturbation and due to suppression of sexual urge these individuals will experience nocturnal emissions. Ultimately the semen that is discharged after masturbation or nightfall is similar to that after sexual intercourse. Hence it is appropriate to say that masturbation has no deleterious effect on health. However, if masturbation is associated with profound guilt, it can affect an individual psychologically. Over-indulgence in masturbation affecting the daily routines may need psychiatric intervention.

Does the penis become curved due to repeated masturbation?

No. Masturbation has no effect on curvature, size, shape or length of the penis. It does not lead to atrophy of the penis either. The size and shape of the penis varies from person to person and they are not linked to this activity.

Does semen get exhausted due to masturbation?

No. Semen is continuously produced in the body. The semen that is accumulated in the seminal vesicles is emptied through various processes such as sexual intercourse, masturbation or nocturnal emissions.

Does masturbation cause physical or mental deterioration?

No. Sex is a basic human instinct. Sexual arousal is a natural phenomenon. This instinct is fulfilled through sexual intercourse and masturbation is an alternative to sexual intercourse in certain circumstances. It does not cause any effect on the intellectual capacity of the individual. If an individual feels guilty about it, it may lead to a disturbed psychological state occasionally. However, this is not an organic effect.

Does masturbation lead to physical exhaustion or weakness?

Physical exhaustion is a subjective feeling experienced by an individual. Even weakness in the absence of any disease is a subjective feeling. Masturbation does not cause any organic disease. Hence such complaints do not have any physical basis.

Does masturbation reduce the reproductive capacity or have any effect on progeny?

Masturbation does not have any effect on the reproductive capacity or progeny. Scientifically, it has been shown that a majority of males masturbate sometime or the other during their life time. Almost all of them have a normal sexual life and normal children.

Do married people masturbate?

Yes. Sometimes even married people may indulge in masturbation after marriage. Some of these situations are ill partner, physical separation due to one or the other reasons, medical advice against penetrative sex or certain psychological disturbances. However, the proportion of married people indulging in such a practice is very low. If a person continues to indulge in masturbation despite having

a healthy partner in the household, it suggests a severe psychological disorder or marital disharmony between them.

Is there any relation between acne and masturbation?

No. Pimples (acne) appear on the face during puberty. During the same period the physical, psychological, and hormonal changes associated with puberty are taking place. Masturbation is more common in the adolescent age group. Both of them occur at almost the same time and sometimes masturbation is associated with guilt. These individuals mistakenly perceive masturbation as a cause of acne. However they are not related to one another.

Does masturbation cause STDs/HIV?

No. STD/HIV is caused by sexual intercourse with an individual having a STD or HIV infection. In fact, masturbation being a non-penetrative act, most often a self-stimulatory activity, there is no possibility of transmission of STDs/AIDS.

What is impotence ?

Impotence is the inability to have penile erection even after sexual stimulation. Impotence is associated with certain illnesses like long standing, uncontrolled diabetes, hypertension and certain spinal cord diseases etc. The underlying disease needs to be managed with the help of medical specialists. Psychological problems can also lead to impotence and can be dealt through psychotherapy, counselling and support.

Does masturbation lead to impotence?

No. Impotence is a condition in which there is inability to have a penile erection. Once an individual is sexually aroused, certain centres in the brain send impulses to the penis resulting in its erection. Certain diseases like uncontrolled diabetes, high blood pressure and some neurological disorders may cause impotence. Severe psychological disturbance is one of the commonest causes of impotence. Masturbation, per se, does not result in breaking this circuit of nerves (neuronal circuit) and hence does not cause impotence. However, if masturbation is associated with development of profound guilt and rejection of one's own sexual desires, it may cause severe psychological stress and impotence. However, such impotence can be managed through psychotherapy.

Can one masturbate with a condom?

Yes, one can use a condom during masturbation. However, masturbation does not cause STDs or HIV infection. One does not need to use condoms to protect oneself against STDs and HIV infection in masturbation. It would be a wasteful use of condoms.

How many times can one masturbate?

There is no such safe frequency limit for masturbation. Masturbation tends to be more common during adolescence and reduces with advancing age. It should be ensured that masturbation does not interfere with one's routine activities due to high frequency or associated guilt. As mentioned earlier, it does not have any physical effects.

How can one reduce masturbation?

Masturbation being a natural phenomena, it is difficult to suggest any norms for its frequency. If masturbation interferes with one's day-to-day routine activities, one should consult a counsellor or sexologist. Generally, engaging one's mind in other creative activities and keeping oneself busy is the best prescription for providing distraction and desired reduction in the frequency of masturbation.

How can one prevent masturbation and are there any medicines for it?

There is no need to prevent masturbation. If it becomes excessive, keeping oneself busy in various activities is sufficient. There are no medicines for preventing masturbation.

Sexual intercourse

What is sexual intercourse?

Sexual intercourse is a word commonly used to describe penetrative sex acts such as peno-vaginal, peno-anal, peno-oral sex etc. When the penis is introduced in the vagina the sex is called peno-vagina sex. When it is introduced in the anal cavity, it is called peno-anal sex. If it is introduced in the oral cavity, it is called peno-oral sex.

When do boys and become capable of performing sexual intercourse?

Generally boys/girls become physically capable of sexual intercourse on attainment of puberty, when the required physical and psychological changes have taken place under the influence of sex hormones. As attainment of puberty can occur at different ages in children, there will be an individual variation in the ages of boys and girls when they become capable of performing sexual intercourse.

What is the frequency of sexual intercourse per night or per week?

There are no norms for the frequency of sexual intercourse. The average frequency of sexual intercourse will be dissimilar in different people. It will also depend on the age of partners. The older they are, the lesser may be the frequency.

healthy partner in the household, it suggests a severe psychological disorder or marital disharmony between them.

How does one say "no" to sex, if the other partner says it is a way of expressing love?

There are many ways in which one can express love and affection. Love is an emotion or a feeling. It does not necessarily mean sex, though it might sound that way to some. Sex is one of the physical ways of showing one's love. Now that the risk of STDs including HIV infection is increasing, it is better to say "no" in view of its potential long-term adverse impact.

We need to remember that we express our feelings best to many of our family members through non-sexual routes. We can do the same in such situations as well. We should also remember that it is difficult to find out the intentions of a person especially when sex is being sought by the person. If one is in love with somebody, he/she should always keep an answer ready for such a question, so that one is not caught completely by surprise. The best policy is to discuss the reasons as to why deferring sex is better for both till marriage. Ideally one should plan before hand just how far one would want to go, and stick to your limits. Since it can be difficult to say "no" in certain intimate situations, it is better to prevent occurrence of such situations rather than meekly resisting and yielding to the demand.

Should one continue to have sexual intercourse even during menses?

The inner layer of the uterus protects a woman from the entry of germs into the body. As this inner layer is shed during menstruation, the vagina and uterus become more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections. During this period if the woman has sexual intercourse with an individual suffering from STDs, the risk of acquiring STDs including HIV infection increases significantly. Additionally, she may not be psychologically prepared to have sex during this period due to the discomfort of menstrual blood flow. One should consider all the above mentioned aspects and decide whether to have sex during menstruation.

Can premarital sex lead to HIV infection?

Yes, it can. HIV infection can be acquired by having unprotected sex with an HIV-infected person. Even if the individual is unmarried, the act is no different from the one performed by a married person. The risk does not depend on marital status, but on risky sexual behavior and its frequency.

Are there any medicines or sprays to increase the duration of sexual intercourse?

The duration of sexual intercourse depends on the level of excitation of both the partners in the act. Good mutual understanding between the two partners can facilitate in prolonging the duration of sexual intercourse. The sex remedies advertised in the lay press do not offer any additional benefit. Certain anesthetic agents if applied locally can delay ejaculation by reducing penile sensations. But, in general, it is better to remember that an effort to create an understanding between the partners is a better alternative to medical intervention.

Is sexual intercourse possible in old age?

Yes. The sexual urge continues to exist even in old age. One can derive sexual pleasures even in old age, depending upon his/her physical health. Though disease like diabetes and hypertension might reduce the performance capacity. Also b'--- of other responsibilities less opportunities the frequency is usually less.

What should be the interval between two sex acts?

After sexual intercourse, there is a phase of resolution in which the penis becomes flaccid. However, if the male partner is sexually aroused again, the penile erection returns. This period can last for a variable time depending on the level of arousal. It may vary from a few minutes to an hour. However, such a period may be lesser in women. Thus, there is no established norm for the time interval between two sex acts.

How long does the penis remain in the vagina during sexual intercourse?

During sexual intercourse, the penis remains inside the vagina till ejaculation. After ejaculation, the penis becomes flaccid and comes out of the vagina. The duration for which the penis remains inside the vagina varies and depends on the level of excitation and understanding between the two partners.

Does sexual intercourse alter the gait of a man or a woman?

Orgasm (peak of sexual excitation or climax) is followed by relaxation of muscles and ligaments. Theoretically, it may give rise to a slight change in the gait. However, its detection may not be as easy as people generally think.

What are important guiding principles for developing a healthy sexual lifestyle?

Following issues must be understood for developing a healthy sexual lifestyle :

- i) During adolescence, individuals may be impulsive and take decision without realizing the consequences. Individuals are easily attracted to each other at the physical level. Infatuation (falling in love blindly) is common in this age group.
- ii) Sex before marriage is an important decision in one's own life. One needs to understand its consequences like unwanted pregnancy and risk of contracting STD/HIV infection, before taking this decision.
- iii) Completion of education, setting into a career and obtaining financial stability are generally considered as the prerequisites for marriage. Social acceptance for sex in our society is mostly after marriage.
- iv) Adolescence is not the right age for sex as girls are not able to bear the burden of pregnancy physically, mentally or emotionally. Boys cannot shoulder the responsibility of parenthood.
- v) There is a tendency to satisfy one's curiosity by sexual experimentation, disregarding the risks and social norms (anti-establishment behavior). Additionally peer pressure and other additions

lend a helping hand to foster risky behavior. This is a passing phase in adolescence and disappears with time and emotional maturity.

- vi) Unsafe sex especially with an unknown person can lead to acquisition of STDs including HIV infection.

Performing a sexual act is a major decision. Careful analysis of the associated responsibilities is necessary before undertaking such a step.

If an individual does not get sexually aroused, what should be done to create sexual desire?

Stimulation of genital organs creates sexual desire but its fulfillment and control lies in the brain. This needs an intact psychosexual neural network. Unless the centres in the brain are stimulated due to physical or other stimulatory processes, one cannot have sexual intercourse. By and large, such stimulation can occur after imagining erotic sexual scenes or seeing such photographs. It is the conditioning of mind which can evoke desire for sex. Anything that can arouse sexual instinct, if it is practiced can lead to sexual intercourse. Persons having such a problem must consult a sexologist for further management.

Should sexual intercourse be avoided during pregnancy?

Pregnancy is not a contraindication to have sexual intercourse until it is physically not possible to have sex. However, it may be avoided when the woman is reaching term as it might expose her and also the foetus to different infections, most important being infections of the genital tract.

After how many sexual encounters can a lady become pregnant?

During each sexual intercourse, millions of sperms are deposited in the vagina. These sperms travel into the uterus. If at this time an egg is released from the ovaries and it unites with a sperm, conception can occur. The released ovum survives for about 24 hours only. Therefore, it is not the frequency of sexual intercourse, but the timing of sexual intercourse that is important from the point of view of conception. If sexual intercourse takes place in the safe period, the chances of conception are lower. But even a single sexual intercourse can result in pregnancy if it coincides with the release of matured ova from the ovaries. The safe period and its related issues have already been discussed elsewhere.

Can a woman get pregnant the very first time she has sex?

Yes. Pregnancy is possible even due to the first sexual experience. This is mainly due to the fact that conception (mating of a sperm and mature ovum) depends not on the frequency of sexual acts or their absolute number, but the timing. If sex has taken place during the unsafe periods, the risk of pregnancy is higher.

What are the difficulties experienced during the first sexual intercourse?

One may encounter certain problems during the first sexual intercourse.

- i) If a woman is not adequately aroused, the quantity of vaginal fluid secreted is affected. If one performs sexual intercourse when these secretions are less, it can be painful due to inadequate lubrication.
- ii) The rupture of the hymen or injury to the frenulum may lead to minimal bleeding as well as pain.
- iii) Fears about sexual intercourse may lead to contraction and spasms of the vagina (vaginismus) which may result in painful intercourse or sometimes inability to have sexual intercourse.
- iv) The high level of anxiety about sexual performance in males can lead to premature ejaculation.

These are some of the problems that one may come across. They do not necessarily occur during every first sexual intercourse in all individuals. To prevent their occurrence partners should understand each other, foster mutual confidence and cooperate with each other. They should obtain

knowledge about the sex organs and prepare their minds. Many times, the first sexual experience may not be satisfying experience due to the factors mentioned above. However, the situation is likely to change as both the partners start understanding one another and co-operate.

Can one get HIV infection after a single sexual exposure with an HIV infected person?

Yes, there is a possibility of getting HIV infection even if one has a single unprotected sex act (i.e. without condom) with an HIV infected person.

What do you mean by virginity? How can it be recognized?

Virginity is a term used to describe the status of a woman who has never had a penetrative sexual experience. There are no specific, objective criteria to ascertain virginity. Virginity is wrongly associated with an intact hymen. The hymen may be found torn in a lady who does cycling, any strenuous exercises or activities. Some people believe that a virgin woman will shout in pain during her first sexual intercourse due to rupture of the hymen. However, this is incorrect. Absence of any painful expression does not mean that she is not a virgin.

Marriage is a relationship where mutual trust binds two people for long period. Those who possess such notions about virginity are actually suspicious about the sexual behaviour of their life partner. Beginning a sacred relationship of marriage on such a suspicious background can pose problems during married life. A healthy positive attitude, instead of suspicion, is the key to a long and happy married life.

Is there any danger of having sexual intercourse with a "private lady" or call girl?

If a person is going to have sexual intercourse with an unknown lady, the so-called "private lady" or a call girl, one must remember that she may also be having many other sex partners. This fact cannot be overlooked. It should be remembered that the chances of getting STD/HIV are more when a person has sex with more than one partner. The more the number of partners, more are the chances of acquiring STD/HIV infection.

Homosexuality

What is homosexuality?

The sexual relationship between persons of the same sex i.e. man with man or woman with woman, is called homosexual orientation.

How do men indulge in a homosexual relationship?

Homosexual men tend to derive sexual pleasure through penoanal (penis in anus), peno-oral (penis in mouth) intercourse, and/or mutual masturbation.

How do women have a homosexual relation?

Women engaged in a homosexual relationship massage each other's vagina or clitoris, primarily. They may also use certain mechanical devices to satisfy each other's sexual urge.

Can homosexual orientation lead to acquisition of STD/HIV infection?

The risk of acquiring STD/HIV infection through sexual intercourse depends on one of the sex partners being infected with STD or HIV infection irrespective of their sexual orientation, whether homo- or heterosexual. However, peno-anal sex, performed in homosexual orientation enhances the risk

of acquisition of HIV/STD because the anal canal, unlike the vagina is not elastic and does not have natural lubricants. This factor increases the chance of tears or micro-injuries, which facilitate transmission of HIV infection. The inner lining of the vagina resists the invasion of germs better than that in the anal canal. Hence, mathematical predictions indicate that the risk of acquiring HIV infection due to peno-anal sex is very high compared to peno-vaginal sex.

However, females having lesbian relationships do not indulge in penetrative sex and hence risk of acquisition of HIV infection is almost negligible in them.

Who is more sexually satisfied in a homosexual relationship the passive or active partner?

Sexual satisfaction depends upon individual expectations, partner compatibility, one's own sexual identity and level of sexual arousal. An individual will enjoy being a passive or active partner depending on his/her own sexual identity and expectations. It is not necessary that a male with a homosexual orientation should necessarily have a fixed role of being a receptive or insertive partner. In fact some of them, will obtain pleasure by being in both the situations. Sexual satisfaction in homosexual orientation does not depend on a particular role.