

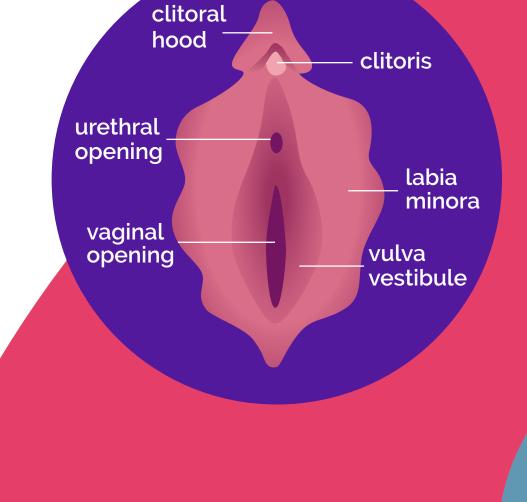
Big Science Behind the Big

Orgasms feel great, but what actually happens in your body when you have one?

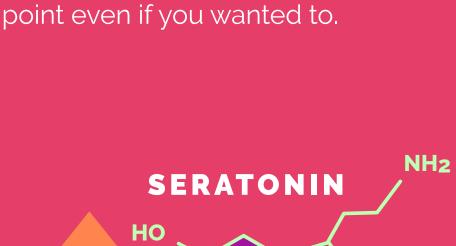
Ah, the ever-elusive female orgasm. We know it feels great, but why? How exactly do orgasms in the female body work? What's the science behind them?

We talked to OB-GYN Dr. Heather Bartos to break down the stages of this toe-curling experience.

EXCITEMENT During excitement, your vagina lengthens and vaginal cells start to lubricate the vagina. The clitoris expands and can even extrude out of the labia. Levels of certain hormones. like the pleasure hormone dopamine, start to increase, your pupils start to dilate, and your skin can appear blushed or flushed. THE PLATEAU Your heart



and the lower part of your vagina swells even more. Now think of horny teenagers from the movies — OH it would be hard to stop at this **OXYTOCIN** (the cuddle chemical) NH HN NH2 HN HN, HO NH **DOPAMINE** NH HO NH NH₂ NH₂ NH₂ HO



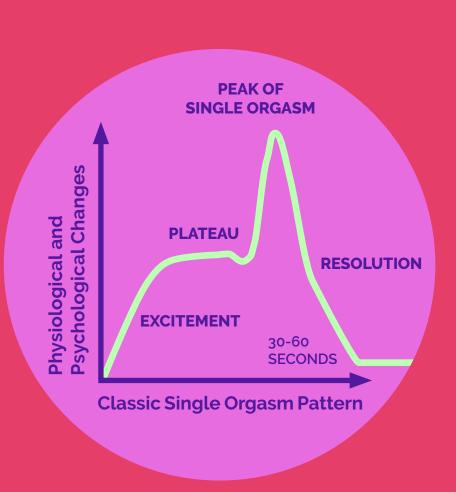
rate and blood pressure increase



THE ACTUAL ORGASM The orgasm itself is about 60 seconds of rhythmic contractions of the uterus, vagina and clitoris and this sends a huge whoosh of oxytocin, dopamine and serotonin from the brain through the body. These movements are involuntary and some women even report that their eyes roll in the back of the head or they forcefully exhale and find a great release of stress.



Paying attention to the build up to the orgasm can make the orgasm itself all the more mind-blowing. But try not to focus on the orgasm too much, or you might miss the wonderful journey leading up to it which can be just as exciting.



POST-ORGASM Finally, there is the post-orgasm moment. For women, this can be very fast, a few minutes even. While you're in this state, your vital signs normalize again — your breathing slows and your heart rate lowers — and you experience a wave of relief and satisfaction. Then, the whole process can start over again.

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