

What is sex , human sexuality, sex hormones and sexually transmitted hormones



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WHAT IS SEX , HUMAN SEXUALITY, SEX HORMONES AND SEXUALLY

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1.

INTRODUCTION Among human's sexual behaviour extends far beyond the mere lack of copulation between a male and a female resulting in offspring. In most species sexual behaviour principally serves the purposes of reproduction. In humans sexual behaviour in addition to reproduction have evolved it has been shaped and influenced by cultural factors hence varying

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across cultures and over history. In spite of these powerful cultural influences, biological factors involved in sexual arousal and response are fundamental to human sexual experience and need to be taken into account in our attempts to understand and explain the complexities and problems as well as the positive aspects of the human sexual condition. 2. WHAT IS

HUMAN SEXUALITY Sexuality is defined as the sum of the structural and functional differences by which male and female are distinguished and the manner in which humans experience and express their sexuality. It normally results in sexual arousal and physiological changes in the aroused person, some of which are pronounced while others are more subtle. It also includes conduct and activities which are intended to arouse the sexual interest of another, such as strategies to find or attract partners (mating and display behaviour), and personal interactions between individuals, such as flirting and foreplay. Human sexual behaviour has sociological, cognitive, emotional, behavioural and biological aspects, including physiological processes such as the reproductive mechanism, the sex drive and pathology; sexual intercourse and sexual behaviour in all its forms; and personal bonding and shared emotions during sexual activity. In some cultures, sexual activity is considered acceptable only within marriage, although premarital and extramarital sex are also common. Some sexual activities are illegal either universally or in some countries, and some are considered against the norms of a society. Human sexuality involves the interrelationship of biological, psychological and sociocultural dimensions. 1. **BIOLOGICAL DIMENSION** It involves our physical appearance, especially the development of physical sexual characteristics, our responses to sexual responses to sexual

stimulation; and our growth and development in general. Although human <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-sex-human-sexuality-sex-hormones-and-sexually-transmitted-hormones/>

reproductive function does not begin until puberty, human sexual-erotic functioning begins immediately after birth and lasts a lifetime. 2.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION Although sexual activity is definitely physical, it also involves psychology - or sense of being. A major psychological factor that affects our sexual wellness is body image. A positive self image leads to a feeling of overall wellness whereas a negative self image can lead to drug abuse or psychological disorders e. g. anorexia, bulimia etc. 3.

SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSION This is the sum of the cultural and social influences that affect our thoughts and actions. The sources of influence include: * Religious influences - they influence feelings about morality, sexual behaviour, adultery, divorce, contraception, abortion and masturbation. * Multicultural influences - cultures differ in their views on sexuality the ability to respect your sexual partner's cultural beliefs and feelings will result in a higher level of satisfaction for both of you. *

Socioeconomic influences and education. * Ethical influences - the ethics of sexuality involves questioning the way we treat ourselves and other people.

* Media influences - the media helps shape public attitudes on topics of sexuality, gender roles and sexual behaviours. 3. **SEX HORMONES** Sex

hormones are responsible for some of the most dramatic changes that occur in the body. They control puberty, egg and sperm production etc. Puberty It is the time in life when a person becomes sexually mature. It is a physical change that usually happens between ages 10 and 14 for girls and ages 12 and 16 for boys. a) Girls It occurs between the ages of about 10 and 14, the pituitary gland produces Luteinising Hormone (LH) and Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) which together stimulate the production of the sex hormones

by the ovaries. The ovaries start to produce oestrogen and progesterone
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which begin the bodily changes that happen during puberty. The changes, known as secondary sexual characteristics, are:

- * The breasts develop
- * The hips and thighs widen
- * Pubic and underarm hair develop
- * The ovaries start to produce eggs
- * Menstruation starts

b) Boys It occurs between the ages of about 12 and 16, the pituitary gland produces LH and FSH, which together stimulate the production of the sex hormones. The testes start to produce testosterone which begins the development of secondary sexual characteristics. Testosterone secretion is not continuous throughout the entire life of a male. It determines the sex of the child and form the male reproductive organs and enable reproductive function. In boys the secondary sexual characteristics include:

- * The voice breaks
- * Hair grows on the face and the body
- * The body becomes more muscular
- * The genitals develop
- * Sperm are produced

4. Human Sexual Response Cycles

The sexual response cycle refers to the sequence of physical and emotional changes that occur as a person becomes sexually aroused and participates in sexually stimulating activities, including intercourse and masturbation. Both male and females experience these phases but the timing is different. In addition, the intensity of the response and the time spent in each phase varies from person to person. It is divided into four phases which are:

- * Excitement
- * Plateau
- * Orgasm
- * Resolution

i. Excitement It is the first stage of the human sexual response cycle. It occurs as the result of any erotic physical or mental stimulation, such as kissing, petting, or viewing erotic images, that lead to sexual arousal. During the excitement stage, the body prepares for sexual intercourse. The general characteristics of this phase, which can last from a few minutes to several hours, include the following:

- * Muscle tension increases.
- * Heart rate quickens and breathing is accelerated.
- * Skin

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may become flushed * Nipples become hardened or erect. * Blood flow to the genitals increases, resulting in swelling of the woman's clitoris and labia minora (inner lips), and erection of the man's penis. * Vaginal lubrication begins. * The woman's breasts become fuller and the vaginal walls begin to swell. * The man's testicles swell, his scrotum tightens, and he begins secreting a lubricating liquid.

ii. Plateau The plateau phase is the period of sexual excitement prior to orgasm. The phase is characterised by an increased circulation and heart rate in both sexes, increased sexual pleasure with increased stimulation, and further increased muscle tension. It's general characteristics of this phase, which extends to the brink of orgasm, include the following: * The changes begun in phase 1 are intensified. * The vagina continues to swell from increased blood flow, and the vaginal walls turn a dark purple. * The woman's clitoris becomes highly sensitive (may even be painful to touch) and retracts under the clitoral hood to avoid direct stimulation from the penis. * The man's testicles are withdrawn up into the scrotum. * Breathing, heart rate and blood pressure continue to increase. * Muscle spasms may begin in the feet, face and hands. * Tension in the muscles increases.

iii. Orgasm Orgasm is the conclusion of the plateau phase of the sexual response cycle and is experienced by both males and females. It is the shortest of the phases and generally lasts only a few seconds. General characteristics of this phase include the following: * Involuntary muscle contractions begin. * Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are at their highest rates, with a rapid intake of oxygen. * Muscles in the feet spasm. * There is a sudden, forceful release of sexual tension. * In women, the muscles of the vagina contract. The uterus also undergoes rhythmic contractions. * In men, rhythmic contractions of the muscles at the base of

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the penis result in the ejaculation of semen. * A rash or " sex flush" may appear over the entire body. iv. Resolution During resolution, the body slowly returns to its normal level of functioning, and swelled and erect body parts return to their previous size and colour. It is marked by a general sense of well-being, enhanced intimacy and, often, fatigue. Men need recovery time after orgasm, called a refractory period, during which they cannot reach orgasm again. The duration of the refractory period varies among men and usually lengthens with advancing age.

5. SEXUAL DYSFUNCTIONS

Sexual dysfunction is the difficulty in having sex during any phase of the sexual act, which prevents the individual or couple from enjoying sexual activity. They include:

- I. Sexual arousal disorder - for both men and women these conditions manifest themselves as an avoidance of sexual contact with a partner.
- II. Sexual desire disorder - it is characterised by lack or absence of sexual fantasies and a decreased or absent desire for sexual activity.
- III. Erectile dysfunction - it is characterized by the inability to develop or maintain an erection of the penis.
- IV. Premature ejaculation - it is when ejaculation occurs before the partner achieves orgasm, or a mutually satisfactory length of time has passed during intercourse.
- V. Sexual pain disorder - it affects women almost exclusively and it is also known as dyspareunia - painful intercourse or vaginismus - an involuntary spasm of the muscles of the vaginal wall that interferes with intercourse.
- VI. Orgasm disorder - it is a persistent delay or absence of orgasm following a normal sexual excitement phase.

6. SEXUAL EXCITEMENT AND ORGASMS

Sexual excitement usually begins in the brain i. e. your brain responds to a sexy thought or image, or having a feeling of closeness or affection toward a partner, or the touch of a partner by sending signals to the rest of your body,

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especially the genital area. Increased blood flow to the genital area causing clitoris to harden and swell in women and erect penis in men is one of the major components of physical sexual excitement.

7. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON SEX

Psychology addresses sexuality from the perspective of the individual and the individual's environment it focuses on the motives behind sexual behaviour and factors that influence that motivation. Culture is far much more than the consistent patterns of behaviour among a group of people. The basic life experiences of the people of a cultural group shape similar cognitive structures which in turn cause the cultural group to perceive their environment in certain consistent ways.

8. SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation is the term used to describe whether a person feels sexual desire for people of the opposite gender, same gender, or both genders. People who feel sexual desire for members of the other gender are heterosexual - straight. People who feel sexual desire for people of the same gender are homosexual - gay. Gay women are also called lesbians. People who are attracted to both genders are bisexual. All these sexual orientations are perfectly normal. It is not known what causes a person to be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual but research shows that it's based on biological factors that are in place before birth. It is not something that one can decide for themselves. Sexual identity and sexual behaviour are closely related to sexual orientation, but they are distinguished, with identity referring to an individual's conception of themselves behaviour referring to actual sexual acts performed by the individual, and orientation referring to fantasies, attachments and longings. Sexual orientation is not a choice therefore it cannot be changed. Some people who are homosexual or bisexual may hide their sexual orientation or live as heterosexuals to avoid

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prejudice against people who are homosexual and bisexual. They may live as heterosexuals in order to avoid their own moral dilemmas when their sexual orientation is incompatible with their personal beliefs

How People Know Their Sexual Orientation

For many people, their sexual orientation becomes evident to them during adolescence or young adulthood, and in many cases without any sexual experience e. g. homosexuals become aware that their sexual thoughts and activities focus on people of the same sex. It is possible, however, to have fantasies or to be curious about people of the same sex without being homosexual or bisexual, or choosing to act on these impulses/attractions.

Homophobia

Homophobia is fear or hatred of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. It can also be fear or hatred of people who may appear to be lesbian or gay. When gay, lesbian, and bisexual people have fear or hatred of themselves because of their homosexuality, it's called internalized homophobia. Homophobia comes from fear. Some people are fearful because they have the wrong information - family, friends, and religious authorities often encourage negative feelings about homosexuality. And some people are fearful because they don't have any information about homosexuality - they are not aware of gay people or issues. Homophobia results in discrimination and sometimes violence. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and those who appear to be homosexual may face verbal abuse or physical violence because of their sexual orientation. This abuse is sometimes called gay-bashing. The stress of homophobia can be very harmful. It can cause depression, fear, isolation, paranoia and internalized homophobia can lead to suicide. It can also hurt straight people. It can keep straight men from forming close friendships with other men.

9. SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

They are infections that are spread primarily

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through person-to-person sexual contact. Some e. g. HIV and syphilis can be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth, and through blood products and tissue transfer. Types of STI's include: a) Genital herpes It is caused by infection with herpes simplex virus. Its symptoms include: Itching or tingling sensations in the genital or anal area, small fluid-filled blisters that burst leaving small painful sores, pain when passing urine over the open sores especially in women etc b) Gonorrhoea It is a sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. Gonorrhoea symptoms in women include a change in vaginal discharge; it may appear in abundance, change to a yellow or greenish colour, and develop a strong smell, burning sensation or pain whilst passing urine, an irritation and/or discharge from the anus. In men the symptoms include a white or yellow discharge from the penis, a burning sensation or pain whilst passing urine and irritation and discharge from the anus. c) Syphilis It is caused by the bacteria *Treponema pallidum*. The infection is usually sexually transmitted, in which case it is called venereal syphilis. It may also be passed from an infected mother to her unborn child, in which case it is known as congenital syphilis. It occurs in four different phases: Early or primary syphilis - people with primary syphilis will develop one or more sores. The sores resemble large round bug bites and are often hard and painless. They occur on the genitals or in or around the mouth somewhere between 10-90 days (average three weeks) after exposure. Even without treatment they heal without a scar within six weeks. Secondary syphilis - it occurs approximately four to ten weeks after the primary infection. The symptoms most commonly involve the skin, mucous membranes, and lymph nodes. There may be a symmetrical, reddish-pink, non-itchy rash on the

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trunk and extremities, including the palms and soles. The rash may become maculopapular or pustular. It may form flat, broad, whitish, wart-like lesions on mucous membranes. | | Latent syphilis - it is where the infection lies inactive without symptoms. Tertiary syphilis - if the infection isn't treated it may then progress to a stage characterized by severe problems with the heart, brain, and nerves that can result in paralysis, blindness, dementia, deafness, impotence, and even death if it's not treated. d) HIV/AIDS Human immunodeficiency virus(HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV/AIDS weakens a person's ability to fight infections and cancer. HIV transmission can occur with unprotected sex or with needle sharing. Symptoms of HIV vary widely. A person may have HIV symptoms or AIDS symptoms without knowing it until they get HIV testing. There is no HIV cure at this time although medications can delay the onset of AIDS. Many people do not develop symptoms after getting infected with HIV. Some people have a flu-like illness within several days to weeks after exposure to the virus. They complain of fever, headache, tiredness, and enlarged lymph glands in the neck, they usually disappear on their own within a few weeks. Following initial infection, you may have no symptoms. The progression of disease varies widely among individuals. This state may last from a few months to more than 10 years. During this period, the virus continues to multiply actively and infects and kills the cells of the immune system. The immune system allows us to fight against the bacteria, viruses, and other infectious causes. The virus destroys the cells that are the primary infection fighters, called CD4+ or T4 cells. Once the immune system weakens, a person infected with HIV can develop the following symptoms; lack of energy, weight loss, frequent fevers and sweats, persistent or frequent yeast

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infections and skin rashes or flaky skin, short-term memory loss, mouth, genital, or anal sores from herpes infections. AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection. The definition of AIDS includes all HIV-infected people who have fewer than 200 CD4+ cells per microliter of blood. Most of these conditions are infections caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, and other organisms. Opportunistic infections are common in people with AIDS. Nearly every organ system is affected. Some of the common symptoms include the following; cough and shortness of breath, seizures and lack of coordination, difficult or painful swallowing, mental symptoms such as confusion and forgetfulness, severe and persistent diarrhoea, fever, vision loss, nausea, abdominal cramps, and vomiting, weight loss and extreme fatigue, severe headaches with neck stiffness, coma etc

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