Dear Alice,

Are there biological differences in orgasms between women and men?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Oh, oh, oh?no? Though much has been said about men?s versus women?s ability to orgasm, there seems to be a growing consensus that there are no major biological differences between male versus female orgasms. Both male and female orgasms are characterized by a contraction of pelvic floor muscles, intense pleasurable sensation, release of endorphins and hormones, and the release of some fluid (though the amount of fluid is often significantly less in the case of female orgasm). And while much has also been made about the difference between clitoral versus vaginal orgasms, it seems there are no major physiological differences between these two types of orgasms.

Orgasm is a very individual and subjective experience, and there is probably more variation between individuals than between men and women. But the orgasm itself ? the felt experience ? is very similar for everyone. So why might it seem like there?s a difference? While men are less likely to experience an inability to orgasm than women, men are more likely to experience premature ejaculation than women. It also seems that women and prepubescent boys can more easily achieve multiple orgasms ? orgasms that occur rapidly, one after the other, perhaps seconds apart. However, some men are able to have multiple orgasms, just as some women are capable of ejaculation.

Perhaps you?re referring to perceived differences in orgasmic behavior? For example, it seems in some cultures that women are expected to be more vocal during orgasm, but this is not likely a biological reflex. A ?screamer? might not be having an orgasm, just as a silent lover might be having multiple. Where do such expectations come from? Beliefs about male and female sexuality come from varieties of sources ? both scientific and cultural ? that influence people?s ideas of what orgasms should be like.

For more information on orgasms, you can check out questions in the Orgasms archives.

Alice!

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