

**'Let's Talk About Sex – Shades of Pleasure'  
Dumfries & Galloway's Sexual Health Week  
21<sup>st</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

**Pleasure: Myth or fact?**

**Talking about sex is good for you**

FACT: Communication is important in any healthy relationship because it lets you share your feelings and tackle problems together. This is also true of your sex life, especially if something is worrying you

**Sex with the same person over years inevitably gets boring.**

MYTH: Sex does not always become boring, but like all aspects of a relationship it needs care and attention. You can help to keep your sex life interesting by finding time to talk about how you are both feeling, and about your and your partner's sexual needs. If one of you wants sex more than the other, talk about it: there might be a solution that suits both of you, for example masturbation instead of full sex

**Sex is good for your heart**

FACT: Anything that exercises your heart is good for you, including sex. Sexual arousal sends the heart rate higher, and the number of beats per minute reaches its peak during orgasm. But as with most exercise, it depends how vigorously you do it. Some studies show that the average peak heart rate at orgasm is the same as during light exercise, such as walking upstairs. That's not enough to keep most people fit and healthy: adults should do at least 150 minutes (two and a half hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as cycling or fast walking, every week.

**Most women do not masturbate.**

MYTH: Some women do masturbate and some don't. There's nothing wrong with masturbating, and it won't harm your health. Some people find that it is pleasurable and helps them to learn what they like and don't like when it comes to sex. Others prefer not to do it. Whatever you decide is fine.

**Having heart disease doesn't have to hold you back in the bedroom.**

FACT: Experts advise that you can usually have sex as long as you can do the everyday activities that have the same impact on your heart without causing chest pain, such as walking up two flights of stairs.

**Sex is a failure if there is no orgasm.**

MYTH: Sex is not "a failure" if you don't have an orgasm. Sex can be about more than coming – it can be about love, intimacy, fun, relaxation and being close to your partner. It can be very pleasurable even if you do not orgasm.

**A hug keeps tension away**

FACT: Embracing someone special can lower blood pressure, according to researchers. In one experiment, couples who held each other's hands for 10

minutes followed by a 20-second hug had healthier reactions to subsequent stress, such as public speaking. Compared to couples who rested quietly without touching, the huggers had:

- lower heart rate
- lower blood pressure
- smaller heart rate increases

So give your partner a hug - it may help to keep your blood pressure healthy!

### **Women always want lots of foreplay.**

MYTH: Women, and men, don't always want the same thing in bed. Foreplay is the build-up to sex, and can include kissing and touching. Women can need stimulation of the clitoris in order to orgasm, but this doesn't mean all women want lots of foreplay all the time. Sometimes a quickie can be just as much fun, if both partners are in the mood!

### **Sex can be a stress buster.**

FACT: Workload too high? Hot and bothered after the morning journey to work? Sex could help you beat the stresses of 21st century living, according to a small study of 46 men and women.

Participants kept a diary of sexual activity, recording penetrative sex, non-penetrative sex and masturbation. In stress tests, including public speaking and doing mental arithmetic out loud, the people who had no sex at all had the highest stress levels. People who only had penetrative sex had the smallest rise in blood pressure. This shows that they coped better with stress.

Plenty of people find that intimacy or orgasm without penetration helps them feel relaxed, as does exercise or meditation. It doesn't have to be penetrative sex; it's whatever works for you.

### **Women want multiple orgasms.**

MYTH: Women don't all want multiple orgasms (having more than one orgasm during sex). Some women never have multiple orgasms but still enjoy sex. What men or women want in bed is different from person to person, and can vary from day to day. Communicating with your partner about how you both feel can help you have sex that suits both your moods.

### **Weekly sex might help fend off illness.**

FACT: There's a link between how often you have sex and how strong your immune system is, researchers say. A study in Pennsylvania found that students who had sex once or twice a week had higher levels of an important illness-fighting substance in their bodies. Immunoglobulin A (IgA) was 30% higher in those who had sex once or twice a week than in those who had no sex at all. However, the lowest levels were in people who had sex more than twice a week.

But don't devise a sex calendar just yet. More research is needed before it can be proved that weekly sex helps your immune system. Another study found that stroking a dog resulted in raised IgA levels in students (resting quietly or stroking a stuffed dog didn't).

### **Women always take ages to have an orgasm.**

MYTH: Orgasms vary between women – what works for one won't work for everyone. Orgasms are not always the same for each woman either. It can

happen quickly, or take time, or not happen at all, and this is normal. If it does take time, this isn't necessarily a problem. It can be pleasurable if both partners are in the mood.

**People who have sex feel healthier.**

FACT: It could be that people who feel healthier have more sex, but there seems to be a link between sexual activity and your sense of wellbeing. A study of 3,000 Americans aged 57-85 showed that those who were having sex rated their general health higher than those who weren't.

And it's not just sex, it's love too. People who were in a close relationship or married were more likely to say they felt in 'very good' or 'excellent' health than just 'good' or 'poor'. It seems that emotional and social support can boost our sense of wellbeing.

**Women always come if they're sexually excited.**

MYTH: Not all women have an orgasm (come) every time they're sexually excited, and this is normal. Clitoral stimulation can help women to orgasm, but sometimes orgasms just don't happen (this could be for a number of reasons, including physical, emotional or psychological) and sex can still be very pleasurable. If you're worried, your GP can be your first stop for help.

**Loving support reduces risk of angina and ulcer.**

FACT: A happy marriage can help to fend off angina and stomach ulcer - at least it can if you're a man. One study of 10,000 men found that those who felt 'loved and supported' by their spouse had a reduced risk of angina. This was the case even if they had other risk factors, such as being older or having raised blood pressure.

Similarly, a study of 8,000 men found there was more chance of them getting a duodenal ulcer if they:

- had family problems
- didn't feel loved and supported by their wife
- didn't retaliate when hurt by colleagues. (In other words, they repressed their anger. Researchers called this their 'coping style')

Researchers suggest that stress, lack of social support and coping style can affect a man's likelihood of developing an ulcer.