

Delayed Ejaculation

Delayed ejaculation is an unusual sexual problem that comes with what appears to be a number of contradictions. For instance, having a substantial and long-lasting erection doesn't necessarily mean the same thing for a guy who has delayed ejaculation as it does for one who doesn't. And masturbation might not be the same, either.

For those of you who have delayed ejaculation or are dealing with it in your relationship, be aware that very little research has been done on this subject and virtually none of it is the double-blind kind that you can hopefully take to the bank. So for those of you who are struggling with this problem, there isn't an abundance of credible resources that are straightforward and easy to understand.

Delayed Defined

Delayed ejaculation is when a guy can usually get a rock-hard erection and can have intercourse for a really long time, but can't ejaculate. What's particularly fascinating is that the majority of men with this problem are able to ejaculate when they masturbate. It's when you put a flesh-and-blood partner between the guy's hand and his penis that he usually has the problem. It can get so bad that his intercourse partner is able to figure out the plot lines to her next three novels before he's even close to coming.

Delayed ejaculation used to be known as retarded ejaculation, until we decided that calling a man a "retarded ejaculator" was a bit harsh. While modern medicine still calls the condition retarded ejaculation, some people refer to it as inhibited ejaculation, and others call it delayed ejaculation.

How many men have delayed ejaculation? We aren't really sure. The guesses range from 1% to 2%, but even if it were only 0.5%, that's still a lot of guys whose corks won't pop.

This condition can present itself differently in different men. It can be intermittent or it can happen every time. It can be lifelong or something that crept up along the way. It can be mild, moderate, severe, or super-severe.

If you are stop-watch obsessed and hellbent on quantifying delayed ejaculation, consider that an average guy lasts somewhere between three and eight minutes during intercourse. At least one researcher has cooked the various standard deviations of how long an average intercourse lasts, and suggests if you can't come after 25 to 30 minutes of thrusting, then you probably qualify as having delayed ejaculation. But here's a problem: for some couples, 25 minutes is just getting warmed up, while for others 25 minutes might be a nightmare of sexual excess. So before declaring a man has delayed ejaculation, both he and his partner need to consider it a problem. There are also situations when a man is able to come after fifteen minutes, but his partner wishes he were done after five. And forget calling it delayed ejaculation if the problem only happens only when a man is using a condom. If that's the case, a dab of water-based lube on the head of the penis before sliding the condom down the shaft might help increase sensation.

As you'll soon see, there can be numerous factors that contribute to how fast or slow a guy launches his load, from the biology that he was born with to how he processes things like excitement and anxiety. Please keep in mind that while one man with delayed ejaculation might respond to X, Y, or Z another man might need A, B and C. So while we'll be taking a shotgun approach and mentioning a number of possibilities, your job is to decide which if any apply to your particular situation.

Biologically Delayed vs. Faster Than a Speeding Bullet

Let's start with biology. If a man has a slow stick for a penis and it's not as sensitive as most other guys, or if his body is wired in such a way that he needs to reach a higher level of excitement than others before it triggers the ejaculation button, then he might be pre-disposed to experiencing delayed ejaculation. He can't do any more to change the way he's wired than you can blink and your Ford turns into a Maserati or your Suburban into a Prius. So what we'll be focusing on are some of the possible work arounds that you might try.

On the other hand, if you have premature ejaculation and come faster than Hans Solo in a Millennium Falcon, you might be thinking, "What's the

big deal—I'll trade my premature ejaculation for his delayed ejaculation in a heartbeat." But unless you've been there and done that, it's hard to understand just how cumbersome and what a burden on a relationship delayed ejaculation can be. It can make sex hard work for both partners.

Even though premature ejaculation and delayed ejaculation are on opposite sides of the cum coin, no matter which ejaculation disorder you've got, it results in the man's ejaculation taking center stage. Instead of his being able to have fun with his partner and to share sexual pleasure with her, sex becomes more about his equipment and its failure to ejaculate when the two of wish it would.

Delayed Precaution

Here's a caution about delayed ejaculation that you won't read elsewhere. Not many years ago we used to say that a woman who couldn't have an orgasm from intercourse was "frigid" and we gave her a medical diagnosis as if she had a disease. While "frigid" is nicer than "retarded," we now consider ourselves more enlightened. We tell people that a lot of women can't have orgasms from thrusting alone during intercourse, and it's completely fine and normal if they have their orgasms from masturbation and masturbation only. In other words, we've tried to make the female orgasm something a woman is allowed to have by her own hand, rather than it being something she needs to put on parade during intercourse.

We are neither as kind nor as generous with men. If a man can come only from masturbation but not intercourse, we call him a "retarded" or "delayed" ejaculator. He feels horrible about himself, and his partner is sure it's because he doesn't find her sexually appealing. Or she doesn't feel like she can do anything good for him in a sexual way. So sex can become a source of dread and anxiety for both partners.

If you are a man or a couple with this problem, why not at least try to remind yourselves that there are plenty of ways you can enjoy intercourse and sexual intimacy without needing an ejaculation to signal that you are crossing the lovemaking finish line. What if you agree on a sign the woman can give during intercourse for when she's satisfied and wants to stop? This takes the pressure off of him, and it takes the pressure off of her.

We'd probably be ahead if we just left it that and said end of subject, but let's look at some of the possible causes and treatments of delayed ejaculation with an emphasis on the words "possible" or "perhaps." That's because much of the current information is based on anecdote, which means if it is real science, it's only real science by accident. And please keep in mind that what follows is strictly for information purposes only, and is in no way meant to take the place of a meeting with your healthcare provider.

It's important to be sensitive that this is something that impacts a couple. The couple's chemistry, ability to talk it over and their willingness to deal with the matter is going to be important if you hope to make progress. And if the man's partner prefers to be passive during sex, helping him deal with his delayed ejaculation will require that she step out of her comfort zone.

Patience if Not Prudence

If you're the kind who are looking for a magic pill, it's unlikely the ejaculation gods will be blowing too many sticky kisses your way. If you want it to be like those TV talk shows where guests solve massive problems in the span of two commercials, forget it. And good luck if your goal is to be like porn stars—where the male actors are human thrust-and-come machines who have no emotions, expression, or the need for feedback and communication with their partners. (Actually, one expert who we consulted on ejaculation problems said that he feels a lot of male porn stars suffer from delayed ejaculation; they just managed to make a career out of it!)

Speaking of magic pills, you want to rule out the possibility that the ejaculation problem is a side effect of a drug or medications you might be taking. Various anti-depressants are at the top of a list that includes antipsychotic medications, methadone and other analgesics, tranquilizers, sedatives, medications to lower your blood pressure, various muscle relaxers, poppers, marijuana, alcohol abuse, and possibly cigarette smoking.

Don't assume that drugs that contribute to delayed ejaculation will list this on their warning labels. There are medications that don't list heart attacks as a possible side effect when they probably should, so don't expect them to put "delayed ejaculation" on the side of the carton. If your problem with delayed ejaculation hasn't been lifelong, try to think back if any new medications were introduced around the same time that your ability to come suddenly went. Likewise, delayed ejaculation can be secondary to erection

problems, or these conditions might occur in tandem, so if you aren't having good erections, see if your healthcare provider can help you with that.

You also want to be sure that delayed ejaculation isn't due to neurological problems including multiple sclerosis, spinal-cord injury, diabetes, thyroid issues, prostate-related problems, low testosterone, certain surgeries or other pelvic unpleasantries. While most cases of delayed ejaculation don't appear to be caused by drugs or disease, it's important to rule out these possibilities.

You also want to rule out diseases that can cause neurological problems, as well as certain psychological states and conditions.

Religion and Abuse?

You might explore whether there were any traumatic psycho-social events that occurred around the time when you started to come slower than a slug in Super Glue. Did you come home unexpectedly to find your wife and best friend going at it on your favorite rug with her screaming, "I've never come like this with that loser husband of mine!"?

Religious prohibitions about sex can be a contributing factor for men with delayed ejaculation. Even without a conservative religious upbringing, guilt and shame can keep a man's semen parked in his pelvis. He might also have concerns about being a dad or his partner were to becoming pregnant.

Is Your Penis a Lying Scoundrel?

One of the first things to appreciate about delayed ejaculation is that the erect penis of a man who has this condition sometimes lies. This can be confusing, because there's often a seriously hard penis between his legs. You'd normally assume the man is highly aroused. But that might not be the case. He might not be allowing himself to experience as much sexual excitement as other guys with hard-ons. To use psychological terms, his erection might be out of sync with his internal state, and the couple may need to work on increasing the level of sexual excitement that he allows himself to feel.

In fact, one of the things that researchers suggest is that the couple focus on increasing the man's awareness of his own sexual pleasure and the sensations that make him feel good. Sometimes men with delayed ejaculation aren't in tune with their body's sensations, and some appear to be so focused on giving their partner pleasure that they won't let themselves be aware of their own sexual excitement, or they don't take in enough pleasure to reach the point of no return when it comes to ejaculation.

Too Much Focus, Too Little Excitement

There are situations in which the man is trying so hard to ejaculate in order to make his partner feel better about the situation that he's focused on his penis at the expense of the rest of his body, and this makes him even more numb to his own sexual excitement.

So consider doing a lot of exploration of the man's body from head to toe—and not just trying to find some magic spot or button that makes him ejaculate. Try to discover some of the subtle things that feel good, and work on talking more easily about them. For some men, this might include long lingering kisses up and down the side of his neck or on his chest, nipples, or back, or maybe a finger up his bum. Again, experiment and explore. Or you can get seriously Cosmo and run silk scarves or soft make-up brushes up and down his body. You might try to stimulate his genitals at the same time that you are kissing his neck. This can help him double up on the excitement and sensation he is feeling.

Again, the goal of this kind of approach is to focus on pleasure rather than on orgasm. You're trying to help him experience sexual pleasure and excitement that he might be blocking out. You're trying to storm the guard that's keeping sensation from putting pressure on the trigger that makes him ejaculate. Of course, you'll need to be sensitive to how much he can handle. While a lot of guys will enjoy whatever you've got to throw at 'em, others will reach a point of overload, after which all you are doing is increasing their resistance.

Note: Some therapists advise that the man not attempt to have intercourse until he can actually feel that he's sexually excited as opposed to simply having an erection.

Harsh, Draconian Masturbation Techniques!

Let's move on to the possible role of masturbation in men with delayed ejaculation. When talking about masturbation, there are at least two factors to consider: one is the physics or mechanics of how you stroke yourself, the other is the fantasy that you call up to help get yourself off.

As for the physics or mechanics, one of the few researchers who has actually studied delayed ejaculation feels that super vigorous or unusual masturbation habits can be a contributor in a number of cases. So he thinks that changing masturbation habits is essential in situations where the guy

masturbates face down, or pounds his meat like he's making chicken fried steak. This researcher often tries to get the guy to stop masturbating for several weeks or months, with the hope that he has to rely on his partner to help him come. Also, when the man does masturbate, a goal is to encourage him to make masturbation more like intercourse than a pound'a'thon. He's encouraged to use his other hand, or perhaps to use oil in a way that makes masturbation more like intercourse. You don't want intercourse to have to compete with forceful masturbation techniques. And masturbating face down is thought to be a major contributor to delayed ejaculation, so if you masturbate face down, start doing it sunny side up.

Masturbation-Gone-Wrong? Or Is This One of Those Chicken-Egg Things?

One trouble with the masturbation-gone-wrong theory is that there are probably plenty of men who pound their meat mercilessly and have no problem ejaculating during intercourse. So if it is a problem, maybe it's only a problem for certain guys who have some of the other contributing factors that we've talked about. Perhaps the guy's penis is less sensitive than most, or his threshold to reach ejaculation is higher, so he learned to masturbate the way he did because it's the only way he could have an orgasm. In that case, his strange way of masturbating isn't the cause of the problem, but the result of it. Still, it's hard to see a downside of a treatment approach that asks him to change hands or ease up on his grip, masturbate face up rather than face down, or turn over the reins to his significant other.

As for the psychological part of masturbation, it is possible that some men with delayed ejaculation have specific fantasies that they need in order to get off, but the realities of intercourse get in the way of being able to call up the fantasy. Let's say a guy has a secret fantasy where his partner is stroking his penis with her feet, or maybe she's dressed in a special corset, or pees on him, or is being gang banged by Dopey, Grumpy, Happy, Bashful, Sneezy, Sleepy and Doc. While these fantasies might work great for him when he's strokin' it alone, how does a guy lose himself in them when he is having intercourse with a real-live partner whose physical presence is a sad reminder that the seven dwarfs are nowhere to be found?

One of the challenges for you and your partner will be in allowing enough of the fantasy to safely emerge to help you get off during intercourse. This means that exploring masturbation fantasies might be fruitful in some

cases of delayed ejaculation. This might not be a problem if what turns a guy on is when his partner wears a certain bra or maybe even a pair of pantyhose with the crotch cut out so they can have intercourse while she's got them on. Most women won't be too offended by those kind of requests, and some might even be turned on by them.

But it can be challenging when your fantasies are at the extreme, or when you feel guilty about your fantasies. It can be particularly difficult when you need the same rigid fantasy to get off each and every time, and sex becomes a mechanical ritual.

For That Rare Man Who Doesn't Abuse Himself

There are also situations where a man with delayed ejaculation can't or won't masturbate. If that's the case, you might start to explore the reasons and beliefs that might be behind that decision. This will require some serious introspection, which is not necessarily the hallmark of all males, let alone those with delayed ejaculation. And for some men who are too embarrassed to masturbate, they might try doing it in stages, starting while they are home alone, and working up to where they can do it when their partner is home but in a different room, and maybe eventually when she's in the same room but without any lights on.

The Joys of Pornography

Another thing that some guys rely on to help them ejaculate is pornography. Of course, pulling out your favorite lad mag while you are making love might not sit too well with your partner, although maybe it will help if she understands that this is the ejaculation equivalent of training wheels, and its purpose is to help you learn or relearn to ejaculate during intercourse. So if the woman is feeling a bit used or this doesn't feel all that sensitive to her needs, it might help if she knows that this is for the transition period while you learn how to ejaculate inside of her or beside her.

Threshold Clinging

A consultant to this book who worked in urology for many years had this theory: When most men feel the sensations that tell them they are about to ejaculate, they either cross the threshold and ejaculate, or they slow down or change positions in order to delay coming. But he felt that some of the men he'd worked with who had delayed ejaculation had trained themselves to

automatically go the other way once they started to feel an increase in sensation. They would decrease their sensation or excitement even though they were still thrusting away at the same speed. He used to advise these men to stop intercourse if they'd backed away from the point of no return more than three times in one session of lovemaking, because he felt that after that they were just reinforcing this march away from ejaculation and teaching themselves to be even better at delaying ejaculation. Again, this is anecdote, not science, but it might have meaning for readers.

Old Advice vs. New

It used to be that the advice given for dealing with delayed ejaculation was to try having intercourse in novel situations: maybe in the kitchen or in the back seat of the car—in places where there might be additional excitement from the lack of familiarity. However, this doesn't seem to be mentioned in the more recent articles written on the subject.

What this attempts to do is distract the man from his usual M.O. where he's often the master of control. You want to help him relinquish his need for control.

Another strategy that is sometimes recommended is that once the man is able to become more aware of his sexual excitement and more able to allow it to build up inside of him, that his partner brings him close to where he's about to ejaculate either with her hands or mouth, and then he quickly puts his penis in her vagina and begins to have intercourse so he doesn't have much choice but to ejaculate inside of her. This way he's able to see and feel that he can ejaculate inside of his partner without the world coming to an end, or hopefully not coming to an end.

Just Imagine

Something that can be helpful with any kind of sex therapy is for both partners to imagine what would happen if the problem were to suddenly disappear. Is it possible there would be some fears or concerns rather than pure joy? Does the problem keep both partners within a certain comfort zone? Would his partner worry that he'd suddenly want sex more often than she does, or that he'd be tempted to try his newfound skills on other women? Would he be concerned that his partner might make new demands on him, or that he'd lose a sense of control?

As for drugs you might take to help you come sooner, none have been approved, and due to side effects from the few drugs that might be of help, there doesn't appear to be anything on the immediate horizon.

ADD, Bipolar Issues and Abuse As Contributors

A very perceptive sex therapist who has treated men with DE believes that some of his patients with attention deficit and bipolar issues have trouble reaching high enough levels of sexual excitement. This is because they are tuning in to everything in the room as opposed to just the sex they are having with their partner. He wonders if some of these men don't watch porn while having intercourse to help them focus on the sex so they can eventually ejaculate.

If you have DE and struggle with attention issues, perhaps his observations will be meaningful for you. While no one is encouraging you to have porn blaring on a 50-inch screen during intercourse, perhaps there are things you and your partner can do to help keep you more focused on the sex you are having and on the building excitement in your body.

This same therapist has also seen men who were sexually abused as boys who he feels may have DE as a result. The body sometimes learns to deal with issues that are too overwhelming for the mind to process and heal.

RESOURCES: Some of the best information available as of presstime are Marcel Waldinger's 2007 chapter on delayed ejaculation in the 4th edition of Sandy Leiblums' "Principles and Practice of Sexual Therapy," and Perelman and Rowland's chapter on the subject in Rowland's 2008 "Handbook of Sexuality and Gender Identity Disorders." If you want the latest on the subject from the top researchers, these are your people. Thanks also to Stephen Braveman.