

Premature Ejaculation: The Simple Program that Teaches Men to Last As Long As They'd Like—At Any Age

By Michael Castleman

The official name for this problem is “premature ejaculation.” But some men fear that “premature” implies they are *immature*. Relax. Maturity has nothing to do with it. The key to curing this problem is to gain voluntary control over something that’s been involuntary. That’s why many sex therapists prefer the term “involuntary” ejaculation. It implies a learning process. What’s involuntary can become voluntary, under a man’s control. (Unfortunately, most physicians, sex counselors, and therapists continue to use “premature.”)

Men’s Most Common Sex Problem—In All Age Groups

According to a landmark 1999 survey by University of Chicago researchers, rapid, involuntary ejaculation is men’s most common sex problem. The myth is that it affects only men under 30. In fact, the Chicago researchers found, in every age group, about one-third of men report this problem. A European survey of 12,133 men age 18 to 70 (2007) estimates a lower prevalence, about 20 percent. But that’s still a lot of men—one in five—and prevalence “did not vary significantly with age.” Many men over 40 suddenly develop rapid, uncontrolled ejaculation after years of enjoying good ejaculatory control.

Fortunately, in the vast majority of cases in men of all age, this problem also pretty easy to cure. Sex therapists enjoy an excellent track record helping men learn to last as long as they’d like. Using sex therapy techniques, men can learn to last longer all by themselves, or with the help of a lover—without drugs, or anesthetic creams. Usually all a man needs is a little rethinking of his lovemaking style, and a modest self-help program that involves perhaps a few new moves. But the sexual variations that cure this problem are fun, and lead to a better sex life—usually within a few weeks to a month.

How Soon Is Too Soon?

Toss your stopwatch. The number of minutes or hours a man lasts is irrelevant. The issue is control. A man has involuntary ejaculation if he ejaculates before he wants to, whether that's two minutes into lovemaking or two hours.

A Bad Habit

Before modern sex therapy was developed in the 1960s, some psychoanalysts maintained that premature ejaculation reflected male hostility against women, that coming quickly was "selfish," a way for men to enjoy their own orgasms while simultaneously frustrating women, who could not have orgasms so quickly.

But men afflicted by rapid ejaculation rarely reported feeling selfish or hostile. Typically, they felt disgusted with themselves because of their lack of ejaculatory control. And after a man has an orgasm, he can stimulate his lover to orgasm by hand, or mouth, or sex toy, so the woman need not be left frustrated. In retrospect, the psychoanalytic perspective seems silly.

For the vast majority of men, involuntary ejaculation is simply a stress-related bad habit acquired as they become sexual. The young male nervous system is every sexually excitable, and young men have no experience training themselves to maintain a high degree of sexual arousal without ejaculating. As a result, in early sexual experiences, many young men come quickly.

In addition, for most men, early lovemaking experiences are fraught with anxiety. Young men know what goes where, but they are generally unschooled in the fine points of lovemaking. They often fear that their penis is too small. Or that the woman might change her mind. Or that parents might walk in. These and other worries often conspire to trigger rapid, involuntary ejaculation.

Without training in how to last longer, over time, rapid ejaculation becomes a habit, one that can feel very hard to break. But just as toddlers learn to sleep through the night without wetting the bed, men can learn how to last as long as they'd like.

Start with a Check-Up

For men troubled by involuntary ejaculation, the first step is to consult a physician, especially if they haven't had a check-up in a while, or if they believe that an illness contributes to their situation. The doctor should review the man's medical

history, including the drugs he takes, perform a physical exam, test the man for genito-urinary tract conditions, and assess his stress situation. Most men are told there's nothing medically wrong with them. That's good news.

But be forewarned: Few family doctors or urologists are trained in sex counseling or therapy. Doctors are unlikely to advocate the simple, do-it-yourself, sex therapy program that can teach most men good ejaculatory control. They're much more likely to offer a low dose of an antidepressant drug. These drugs have a side effect, delay of ejaculation. However, only a small fraction of men truly need medication. Men should try either the do-it-yourself program outlined below or sex therapy *before* resorting to drugs.

Don't Tune Out Your Body. Tune Into It.

Faced with rapid, involuntary ejaculation, most men try to distract themselves, believing that by thinking about other things, they can trick themselves into lasting longer. Usually, that only made things worse.

Don't tune out your body. *Tune into it.* You need to become more familiar with your different levels of sexual arousal. You also need to recognize how you feel as you approach your point of ejaculatory inevitability, the "point of no return." Once you recognize how you feel close to your point of no return, it's not difficult to make small sexual adjustments that allow you to remain highly aroused without ejaculating.

In men, sexual arousal is a four-phase process. In the Excitement Phase, breathing deepens, and erection begins. In the Plateau Stage, erection becomes firm (though it may lose and regain firmness), and the man feels highly aroused. When arousal builds to a certain point, the next phase occurs, Orgasm and Ejaculation. Most men consider orgasm and ejaculation synonymous. Actually, this is not the case. Each can occur without the other. However, typically, they occur together. Finally, during the Resolution Phase, breathing returns to normal and erection subsides.

The key to ejaculatory control is learning to extend the Plateau Phase, to maintain arousal without triggering Orgasm and Ejaculation.

It Helps to Stay Sober

To tune into your body, it helps to stay sober. Many men mix sex with drugs or alcohol. That's up to you. But if you're learning to last as long as you'd like, take

a break from drugs and alcohol. They're distracting and they interfere with the self-awareness crucial to learning ejaculatory control.

The Sex Therapy Last-Longer Program

Here's a brief version of the sex therapy program that teaches men to last as long as they'd like:

- Appreciate whole-body sensuality. Men often think that the only sexual part of their body is their penis. That view is a one-way ticket to uncontrolled ejaculation (not to mention erection problems, and women with those proverbial headaches). The best sex involves head-to-toe arousal. Men learning how to approach—but not arrive at—their point of no return, need to appreciate whole-body sensuality, that is, massage, the pleasure potential from touch in every square inch of the body. Whole-body sensuality releases tension. Tense bodies that have no other outlet often find release through involuntary ejaculation. But as men learn to appreciate sensual pleasure from head to toe, whole-body arousal takes the pressure off the penis, and the man lasts longer.

Whole-body sensuality means relaxation, but the “relaxation” involved in great sex is not the kind that includes an easy chair, a six pack, and Monday Night Football. It's the kind you feel after a hot bath or a good massage. In fact, bathing or showering together before lovemaking can help men relax and appreciate whole-body sensuality—and last longer.

- Breathe deeply. One very easy way to stay relaxed while making love is to breathe deeply. The body has a natural tendency to breathe deeply during sex. But many men fight it. They think they should stay in control by not breathing deeply and making the little love-moan sounds that go along with it. But when men work to control their breathing, they often sacrifice ejaculatory control. Try breathing deeply. Let your breath go. Many men are amazed how much this one little change improves their ejaculatory control.
- Adjust your fantasies. Some men have specific sexual fantasies that get them so hot that they have trouble maintaining ejaculatory control. Give them a rest, and focus on fantasies that are exciting, but don't put you over the top.
- Start with masturbation with a dry hand. By varying how you caress your penis, you can learn to stay highly aroused for quite a while without coming.

When you feel yourself approaching the point of no return, simply back off a bit, stroke yourself more gently or not at all, and stay aroused without ejaculating. Then as you feel yourself getting a little distance from your point of no return, return to more vigorous self-stimulation. Repeat this several times over several sessions. Approach your point of no return, then back off. For most men, it doesn't take long to develop good ejaculatory control while alone.

- Then move on to masturbation with a lubricated hand. Use saliva, vegetable oil, or a commercial sexual lubricant. For most people, lubricants increase the sensual intensity of erotic fondling. Follow the same program: Masturbate until you approach your point of no return, then back off. Repeat this several times over several sessions.
- If you're in a couple, use the couples program, the "Stop-Start. Technique." First, arrange "stop" and "start" signals with your lover, for example, the words stop and start, or a light pinch or tap, or a tug on an ear. Then, your lover strokes your penis by hand as you lie still. When you approach your point of no return, give the "stop" signal. Your lover immediately stops stroking you and simply holds your penis gently, as you continue to breathe deeply and pays close attention to the sensations you're feeling. When you no longer feels close to ejaculation, gives the "start" signal, and your lover begins stroking you again. How many stops and starts should you do? A half-dozen over a 15-minute period works well for most couples. Do what feels comfortable for you.
- Don't forget the woman's sensual needs. With stop-start, the focus is on the man. He's the one learning the new skill. But even when he's learning ejaculatory control, lovemaking is still a *couple* activity. Don't forget the woman's erotic needs. As part of each practice session, she might guide your hand over her to show you what she likes.
- Once you've gained good ejaculatory control with your lover's hand, try the same stop-start procedure with oral caresses. Again, you begin by lying still. Once you've gained good control during fellatio while remaining still, feel free to start moving.
- If vaginal intercourse is part of your lovemaking, incorporate stop-start into it, first, with the man lying still, and once he has good control that way, with him moving.

- Give it time. It's important to understand that learning ejaculatory control takes time and practice. You may feel a little awkward along the way. Try to maintain a sense of humor about any accidental spills.

Additional Suggestions

- The man-on-top (missionary) position can be fun, but it's harder for most men to control their ejaculatory timing, because they have to hold themselves up. Try making love with the woman on top. This position is more relaxing for men, and it often helps ejaculatory control.
- Make some noise. Love moans help men (and women) relax, and they often help men last longer.
- It's important to understand that learning ejaculatory control takes time and practice. You may feel a little awkward along the way. Try to maintain a sense of humor about any accidental spills.

The Sex Therapy Program *Works*

With premature ejaculation ranking as men's number one sex problem, you'd think that it would be the focus of a great deal of sex research. Alas, that is not the case. In the 1960s and 1970s, several studies demonstrated the value of the Stop-Start Technique (and its predecessor, The Squeeze). But since then, few studies have addressed all the other suggestions discussed above. Fortunately, researchers at the University of Quebec have done this. Their findings show that the approaches discussed in this article work quite well.

Rapid, Involuntary Ejaculation After 40

Some men learn good ejaculatory control in their 20s or 30s, only to have it collapse after 40. What's going on?

Usually the problem has to do with middle-age erection changes. After 40—and often around 50—erectons become balky. They no longer rise from fantasy alone. They require direct penis stroking, sometimes for extended periods. When erectons rise, they are not as firm as they once were. And minor distractions may cause them to wilt.

Midlife erection changes are totally normal, but many (most?) men are unprepared for them. As a result, these changes can be emotionally difficult, and anxiety-provoking. Anxiety (stress) is a major contributor to premature ejaculation at any age. In young men, the anxiety involves their sexual inexperience and often a fear that the woman might suddenly lose interest in sex. In older men, the anxiety usually has to do with erection changes and the self-doubt they engender (though other stressors may also be involved).

Whatever the reason for the stress rapid, the treatment program for involuntary ejaculation is the same: Relax. Breathe deeply. Avoid alcohol. Commit to whole-body, massage-based caresses. And use the stop-start technique. Older men should also trust their penises. Middle-age erection balkiness is normal. If you relax, breathe deeply, and receive sufficient stimulation, your erection should return. If it doesn't, erection is not necessary for orgasm. With enough direct penis stimulation, you can have an orgasm even if you don't have an erection.

Drugs?

Nowadays, if you tell a doctor you have premature ejaculation, you'll probably be offered a prescription for a low dose of an antidepressant, most likely one of the Prozac family of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), including Paxil, Zoloft, Celexa, and Luvox. The vast majority of men with involuntary ejaculation are not depressed, so why prescribe antidepressants? The reason has nothing to do with these drugs' mood-elevating action. But a side effect of these drugs is *delayed ejaculation*.

These drugs don't cure involuntary ejaculation. They simply eliminate the symptom. When you stop using the drug, you're likely to return to rapid ejaculation. In some cases, drug therapy helps men learn ejaculatory control. But the vast majority of men with this concern don't need medication.

Anesthetic Creams?

Some penile skin creams advertise that they help a man last longer. These products contain topical anesthetics that dull sensation in the penis. If you like to play with penile sensation, there's no harm in using them. But they're not a good idea for learning to last longer. They dull sensation. But the key to lasting longer is for the man to become more familiar with what he feels so he can back off from his point of no return while still remaining highly aroused.

Masturbate Beforehand?

This approach often helps young men, who can raise a second erection shortly after ejaculating. Frequently, the second time around they last longer. But it's much less of an option for men over 40, who might need several hours or longer to become erect again. Chances are you can learn good control without masturbating beforehand.

How the Program Can Enhance Women's Enjoyment

Finally, the program we recommend for learning ejaculatory control is very likely to provide your lover with greater sexual enjoyment—but not just because you last longer. Women generally prefer leisurely, playful, whole-body, massage-oriented sensuality that includes the genitals but is not limited to them. Women's main complaints about men's sexual style are that it's too rushed, too mechanical, too eager for intercourse, and that it focuses only on the breasts and genitals. Women generally feel that the whole body is a sensual playground, and can't understand why so many men explore only a few corners of it. Like women, penises generally prefer leisurely, playful, whole-body, massage-oriented lovemaking. The rushed, penis-centered, intercourse-fixated sex style puts a lot of pressure on the penis, and leads to premature ejaculation. But when men make love the way women prefer, whole-body arousal takes the pressure off your penis and you last longer. Basically, if men would make love the way women prefer, women would have fewer complaints, and men would have fewer sex problems.

Need More Help?

My book, *Great Sex: The Man's Guide to the Secrets of Whole-Body Sensuality*, contains a much more comprehensive, 30-page discussion of techniques for lasting longer. It's available through Amazon.com.

If the book doesn't cure you, sex therapy almost always can, usually in a few months. To find a sex therapist near you, visit the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists at aasect.org, or sstarnet.org, the Society for Sex Therapy and Research.

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