

The Rare Truth About Penis Size: How to Make The Most of What You've Got—And How Best to Please Women with It

By Michael Castleman

Summary

Most men think their penises are too small, and many think that it takes a big one to sexually satisfy women. Wrong on both counts. Your size is fine, and contrary to what you see in pornography, penises have rather little to do with women's sexual satisfaction.

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In a magazine survey some years ago, 1,000 men were asked about their size. Almost every respondent said he was “too small” and wished he were larger. “Men are obsessed with penis size,” says Palo Alto, California, sex therapist Marty Klein, Ph.D, “During more than 20 years as a therapist, male clients have raised the issue so many times, I’ve lost count.” And a report in the *British Journal of Medicine* (now called *BMJ*) declares that male anxiety about penis size is so pervasive, it might be considered a “disease.” No wonder that expensive—and useless—offers for extra inches fill email inboxes.

Many men are convinced that it takes a large penis to please a woman. Pornography certainly supports that view. All penises in porn are much larger than average and the women ooh and ahh over them. In addition, ads for casual partners often request men with unusually large penises.

Some women do, indeed, prefer men with a particular penis size (larger or smaller than average), just as some men have clear preferences about women’s breasts, buttocks, weight, and figure. That’s fine. People have a right to their personal preferences.

But many men are convinced that women judge lovers by their penis size. No, they don’t. Women are much less fixated on size than men think they are. Croatian researchers surveyed 556 women, age 19 to 49. Only 17.5 percent called penis size “important.”

Beyond personal preferences, there is *no connection* between a man’s size and the pleasure he can provide a lover. “It’s sad how few men understand this,” Klein explains. “Any size penis can bring great pleasure to the man it’s attached to. As for women’s pleasure, it rarely has much to do with the man’s penis or how he uses it to fill her vagina. Women’s pleasure has more to do with the woman’s clitoris

and how the man uses his fingers, palm, lips and tongue to caress it—especially his tongue.”

The Vast Majority: Average

I know of no published scientific surveys of penis size. But during my 20+ years of reporting on this issue, I’ve interviewed several urologists, physicians who have closely examined thousands of penises.

How many men are noticeably smaller than average? “At most, 5 percent,” says Baltimore urologist James Smolev, M.D., who been in practice more than 30 years.

How many are noticeably larger? “Maybe 10 percent,” Dr. Smolev says.

And how many are truly huge? “Very, very few. The vast majority of men are average, or a little bigger or smaller. In my entire career, I recall only a few guys I’d call really enormous.”

Why Most Men Think They’re Too Small

Where do average-size men get the idea they’re too small? “From pornography,” explains Richard Pacheco, a male porn star of the 1970s, now retired. “The men in porn are a self-selecting group. Only the guys with the biggest dicks audition, and of those, the directors select the largest.”

The only penises heterosexual men get to see really up close—other than their own—are the ones in x-rated media. They *really are* significantly larger than the vast majority of penises. Porn penises are the standard against which men judge themselves, and that standard is seriously skewed toward Goliaths. As a result, all the Davids of the world are justified in believing that they’re “small.” (Speaking of David, have you ever taken a good look at the famous statue by Michelangelo? David’s penis is quite small. The same goes for virtually all classical male nude sculptures.)

In addition, men look *down* on their own penises from above, which makes them look even smaller, Pacheco explains. But they view porn penises from other angles: “So many of the penis shots are photographed up from underneath. That makes any penis look big.”

Size: For the Record

According to urology textbooks, the average flaccid penis measures 3 to 4 inches in length, but this is a rather “soft” figure, as it were, because it depends on several factors. Most men notice that the size and hang of their penises vary. Sometimes they look shriveled, other times larger and better hung (more later). Flaccid size also depends on how much you stretch your organ while measuring it (most men pull hard), and where you measure from—medical sources measure from the base of the top of the shaft where it attaches to the lower abdomen. As for the erections, they typically measure from 5 to 7 inches.

Flaccid size has nothing to do with erection size, says Martin J. Resnick, professor of urology at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. It’s quite possible to have a flaccid penis on the small side, but a 7-inch erection. In general, the smaller the flaccid penis, the more length and girth it gains in erection.

Racial Differences?

In male folklore, a great deal is made of racial differences in penis size. Black men are reputed to be larger than whites, who are supposedly larger than Asian men. Urologists and others I’ve interviewed generally concurred with these stereotypes, but insisted that racial characteristics take a back seat to individual differences. “I’ve seen penises bigger and smaller than average in men of every race,” says New York City sex educator Betty Dodson, Ph.D.

8 Safe, Natural Ways to Make the Most of What You’ve Got

Whether flaccid or erect, penis size depends on the amount of blood that enters the organ through the pudendal arteries, and the amount of blood in the penis’ central corpus cavernosa, the spongy tissues that fill with extra blood during erection. So size depends on filling the penis with as much blood as possible. Here’s how:

Eat Less Meat

No doubt you’re familiar with exhortations to eat a diet low in animal (saturated) fat to prevent heart disease. Maybe more men would heed this advice if the American Heart Association added that a low-fat diet also helps penis size. A diet high in animal fat raises cholesterol, which narrows the arteries, including the ones that carry blood into the penis. As these arteries narrow, less blood gets in there, and the penis shrinks. If you eat meat and cheese, eat less.

Quit Smoking

If you need another reason to quit, smoking accelerates arterial narrowing, which is why smokers are at high risk for heart disease. Cigarettes hit men below the belt as well, limiting blood flow into the penis.

Embrace a Relaxation Regimen

The pudendal arteries are surrounded by smooth muscle tissue. When men feel anxious, explains Bloomfield Hills, Michigan sex therapist Dennis Sugrue, Ph.D., a past president of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT), this muscle tissue constricts, limiting blood flow into the penis. But as men relax, this tissue also relaxes, allowing increased inflow. As a result, deep relaxation, the kind associated with meditation, coaxes more blood into the penis. (Viagra and other erection drugs work by relaxing the penis' smooth muscle tissue.)

In addition, anxiety triggers the “fight or flight” response. This reflex sends blood away from the central body, including the penis, and out toward the limbs for escape or self-defense. But as men relax, more blood becomes available to the penis. “When men become distressed about their size,” Klein says, “the anxiety may contribute to penis shrinkage. If you want to be all you can be, relax, and stop worrying about it.”

Warm Penis, Larger Penis

You’ve probably noticed that in chilly locker rooms, your penis seems to shrink and your scrotum hugs your body tightly. But after a hot shower, your penis looks larger and your scrotum becomes hangs much lower. Warmth is relaxing, Resnick explains, which increases blood flow into the penis and encourages the scrotum to relax and hang lower.

Cultivate a Comfortable, Committed Relationship

Sure, flings can be fun and new relationships are exciting. But they also involve sex with women you don’t know very well, if at all. That can produce anxiety. A familiar lover may not be as exciting as a new one, but familiarity allows you and your penis to relax, which helps your organ look its largest.

Exercise Regularly

Exercise improves arterial function, allowing the circulatory system to carry more blood into the penis.

But exercising the penis itself doesn't help. The sex media sometimes refer to the penis as the "love muscle," which implies that like the biceps, certain exercises can buff it up. "The penis contains muscle tissue," Klein explains, "but there are different kinds of muscle. The penis contains smooth muscle, not the kind that gets bigger with exercise."

In addition to increasing blood flow into the penis, here are other size-enhancing suggestions:

Lose the Belly

"When a man has a big gut," Sugrue explains, "excess fat tissue encroaches on the base of his penis, which makes it look smaller. Lose the abdominal fat pad, and you look larger." One way to lose weight is to exercise more, another good reason to be physically active.

Try a Pubic Haircut

"When less of the penis is obscured by hair," Sugrue explains. "it looks larger."

DON'T Buy Pills or Devices That Promise Enlargement—They're Frauds

Chances are you've received dozens (hundreds?) of junk emails promising extra inches using various miraculous pills, potions, and devices. The Web sites for these products often feature videos of sincere-sounding men who gush that they were skeptical, but "this really works." Nonsense. None of these products actually enlarge the penis. They are all cynical frauds, every one of them.

True story: A friend of mine owns a sex toy store. Some years ago, a salesman approached him offering a penis-enlargement pill. "You buy bottles wholesale for \$19.95 and retail them for \$79.95," the salesman gushed, "a marvelous mark-up."

My friend declined, saying, "No pill can increase penis size."

"You're right," the salesman replied. "But no one ever asks for a refund or sues. They're too embarrassed."

That embarrassment can mean big bucks for the cynical criminals who market penis pills. No one knows how many companies are involved in this fraudulent, immoral business, but a report in the *New York Times* (2003) suggests that producing bogus penis pills costs as little as \$2.50 a bottle, while marketers sell them for around \$50. The *Times* estimates that some marketers gross as much as \$10,000 a day (\$3.65 million a year)—which is why so many of them can afford to bombard men with junk email promising extra inches.

All penis enlargement pills, potions, and supplements are frauds. The same goes for traction devices that supposedly stretch the penis. In masturbation, most men yank on their penises, stretching them. Has that ever added permanent inches to yours? Those who market penis enlargement products are criminals preying on anxious, misinformed men. Don't fall for their BS.

Jelqing?

Jelqing is supposedly an ancient Middle Eastern penis-enlargement technique. But none of the standard works on the history of sex mention it. Jelqing involves making an circle with the thumb and index finger, wrapping it around the semi-erect penis, and then pulling the organ 200 to 500 strokes a day using a rhythmic milking motion. On some Internet sites, men make extravagant claims of extra inches. But jelqing is very similar to the way many men masturbate. Has masturbation boosted your size? Forget jelqing. It has zero effect on size.

Two Sex Toys May Produce Temporary Enlargement

C-Rings

If you enjoy playing with sex toys, two devices may temporarily boost erection size—C-rings (also known as cock rings) and vacuum constricting devices, generally known as penis pumps.

C-rings are rubber or leather donut-shaped devices that tightly encircle the erect penis. Typically used to help maintain erection, they may also provide a small, temporary size boost. Just don't expect miracles.

Some men think of the penis as a balloon, filled with blood when erect, and empty when flaccid. This is incorrect. Whether flaccid or erect, blood circulates in and out of the penis all the time. The arteries that carry blood into the penis run through the center of the organ, so during erection, as blood fills the penis' spongy erectile

tissues, a C-ring doesn't keep blood out. However, one of the two veins that carry blood out of the penis, the superficial dorsal vein, runs close to the organ's outer skin (on top). As the penis expands in erection, both the superficial and deep penile veins naturally get somewhat compressed, which restricts blood outflow and contributes to blood pooling and erection. A C-ring restricts outflow a bit more by compressing this superficial vein. The net effect is somewhat greater blood build-up in the penis, and a slightly larger, firmer erection. Just bear in mind that any effect is modest.

There are two kinds of C-rings, adjustable and not. If you're at all concerned about damaging your penis—bruising is possible from a ring that's too tight—use an adjustable ring. "Some guys swear by C-rings," Dodson observes. "Others say they do little, if anything." If you'd like to try a C-ring, they're available from sex toy marketers.

Penis Pumps

Penis pumps are plastic tubes that create a partial vacuum around the penis. The vacuum draws blood into the organ, resulting in temporary size enhancement. They were invented about 40 years ago, not as sex toys, but as therapeutic devices designed to produce temporary erections in men who otherwise couldn't raise them. (This was long before erection drugs. Pumps are still used by men who get no benefit from erection drugs.) Once a pump has raised an erection, users roll on a constriction band similar to a C-ring to help maintain turgidity. "For temporary erection," Smolev explains, "vacuum devices are reliable, safe, and effective, and usually produce good results."

Even if your penis has no trouble becoming erect, pumps can be used for temporary size enhancement. Models differ, but all include a plastic tube that fits over the penis, fitted with a pump operated by a hand bulb. You squeeze the bulb, which evacuates the air from the plastic tube, drawing blood into the penis. Just remember, the effect is modest and temporary. It also depends on the tightness of the seal created where the tube meets the base of the penis. Sex toy pumps may not create a tight seal. Prescription pumps, available through urologists work better but are custom-made and cost a lot more.

Surgical Enhancement: Don't

The ad say: "Give Yourself a Major Confidence Boost: Surgical Penis Lengthening and Girth Enlargement" with a urologist's contact information. Surgical enlargement might boost your self-esteem. Then again, it might also destroy it.

Two surgical approaches are available. The more popular is lengthening. It's based on the fact that you have more penis than what you see between your legs. The penis extends into the lower abdomen. The internal penis is held in there by the penile suspensory ligament. Cut this ligament, and much of the internal penis emerges, adding about an inch to visible length.

But cutting this ligament also has a significant downside. The suspensory ligament is what makes erections stand up. A surgically lengthened penis still becomes firm during erection, but it no longer salutes. Instead, it hangs down between your legs, requiring you or your lover to direct it by hand into erotic openings.

The other surgical option is girth enhancement. This is a two-step procedure involving fat removal (liposuction) from the buttocks, then injection of that fat under the penile skin. The before-and-after pictures offered by urologists who perform this procedure show pencils transformed into bratwurst. But again, there are downsides. The fat injections may not "take," meaning you've wasted your money. In addition, they may take unevenly, producing a lumpy, mutant-looking organ.

The Web sites of urologists who perform penile enlargement surgery are filled with testimonials. But Resnick said these procedures carry a significant risk of infection and deformity. Smolev was even more emphatic: "Any surgery to lengthen or thicken the penis should be outlawed." And the Web site of a prominent penis-enlargement surgeon warns that many urologists who perform penis enlargement "lack the skills needed to produce good results.....A large part of [this doctor's] practice involves repairing the numerous men damaged by [other] surgeons."

"You couldn't pay me to have my penis surgically altered," Klein says. "The horror stories I've heard are horrendous."

If you're interested in surgery, the cost is about \$6,000 for lengthening and \$7,000 for girth enhancement, plus airfare, hotel, and food for several days. Lengthening comes first, then six to 12 months later, girth enhancement. Figure \$15,000 for both—all out of pocket. Insurers don't pay for penis enlargement.

There is, however, one type of minor surgery that's quick and safe and can make the penis look larger, Smolev explains: "Liposuction of the suprapubic area." That's the fat pad in the lower abdomen above the penis, better known as a pot belly or beer belly. "If you eliminate suprapubic fat, the penis looks bigger."

The Downside of a Big One: Most Guys Who Are Huge Wish They Were *Smaller*

Most men wish they were bigger, but ironically, the few men with phone polls in their jeans typically wish they were *smaller*. “This may come as a shock to men,” says Southern California sex therapist Patti Britton, Ph.D., past president of the Foundation for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, “but many women are afraid of really big penises. A large penis can feel uncomfortable during intercourse and even hurt the woman.”

“Every now and then,” Dodson recalls, “I’ve talked with men who are really huge. I’ve shown women photographs of their penises. The women would ooh and ahh, but almost all said, ‘No way I’d ever want that thing in me.’ To a man, the huge men I’ve interviewed have said that having an enormous penis brought them very little joy. It was more of a burden.”

Most Women Don’t Care

“Women are right,” Klein says. “Men *are* too preoccupied with penis size. Some women may be size queens, but after more than 30 years in practice as a sex therapist, I’ve counseled thousands of couples, and I can’t recall a single women ever raising it as an issue. Men hung up on penis size don’t understand good sex. No matter what your size, your penis can bring you great pleasure. But the best way to impress women in bed is to find creative ways to give them pleasure *without* using your penis. Only 25 percent of women are consistently orgasmic during vaginal intercourse. Most women need direct clitoral stimulation with a hand, a toy, or a tongue.”

“There’s nothing worse,” says Dodson, “than a big penis on a guy who thinks size is everything. Sex with a guy like that is a nightmare. He plunges in before the woman is ready. The sex often hurts. Personally, I’d rather make love with a guy on the small side who knows how to use his tongue on my clitoris than a guy with a huge penis who thinks stuffing that turkey inside me is all there is to sex.”

How Best to Please Women—No Matter What Your Size

In an old blues song, a woman sings: “It ain’t the meat, it’s the motion/ That makes your momma wanna rock./ It ain’t the meat, it’s the motion./ It’s the movement that gives it the sock.”

Dodson prefers a tongue on her clitoris to a penis in her vagina. But she also appreciates the closeness and intimacy of vaginal intercourse. She just wishes men were gentler about insertion, more patient as lovers, and had a better sense of the slow, sensual, erotic rhythm most women prefer during intercourse. Here are her suggestions for skillful use of what's between your legs:

- Don't plunge in the moment a woman spreads her legs. Go slow. Give her time to warm up to intercourse. "It takes a good 20 minutes of kissing, touching, and fooling around for my vagina to relax enough to comfortably accept an erection."
- Use a lubricant. "A good lover always uses lube. Spread some on the penis and around the vaginal opening. Lube makes intercourse so much more comfortable." Sexual lubricants are available at pharmacies. Vegetable oil may also be used (but it may stain linens).
- Enter slowly. "Most men push in too quickly. I've always preferred to be on top. That way I have more control of the speed and depth of insertion. In my experience, most women share that preference."
- Don't go deep right away. "The most erotically sensitive part of the vagina is the lips. Use the head of your penis to tease her lips. Then run it up her vulva to her clitoris. And even after you've gone deep, pull out and tease her lips some more."
- Cultivate a rhythm. "Don't pump in and out furiously like the men in pornography. Develop a slow, sensual rhythm. Talk about the kind of rhythm the woman likes. Some like in and out, but many prefer a slow grind around in circles, or a combination of in-out and circular movement."
- It ain't the meat, it's the clitoris. The clitoris, women's pleasure organ, develops from the same embryonic cells as the head of a man's penis. It's located outside the vagina and a few inches above it, under the top junction of the vaginal lips. Intercourse provides very little direct clitoral stimulation. That's why only 25 percent of women are consistently orgasmic during intercourse. Three-quarters of women need direct clitoral stimulation with fingers, lips, tongue and/or sex toy. "I wish men would get over their preoccupation with penis size," Dodson says. "If you want to please a woman, focus on her clitoris. Fondle it gently, and especially lick it. That's much more enjoyable than feeling impaled on any size erection."

Positions to Play With

With all due respect to the clitoris, many women enjoy the feeling of having a penis deeply filling their vaginas. “Some women love deep penetration because it makes them feel closer to the man,” Britton says, “with a more intimate connection to him. And men like it because it makes them feel larger.” The good news is that deep penetration depends less on penis size than on sexual position.

The standard man-on-top (missionary) position doesn't allow particularly deep penetration, Britton explains, but a few variations do. With a pillow under the woman's hips to raise her a bit, she bends her knees over her chest, then the man can kneel between her legs and enter her. Or he can hold her legs over her head.

The woman-on-top position allows the woman maximum freedom of movement. Many women enjoy this position best, Britton says. Encourage her to experiment with variations that give her a filled-up feeling.

Rear entry (doggie style) allows some of the deepest penetration. In this position, even an average-size penis can bang into the vaginal wall and cause the woman discomfort or even pain. Enter slowly and be careful not to thrust too deeply. For an erotic variation, try this one with the woman standing and bent over a table with you behind her.

Warning: For the few men with unusually large penises, deep penetration should be avoided because of the possibility of hurting the woman.

Make Peace with Your Penis

“It's a real shame so many men feel inadequate because of their size,” Dodson says. “I urge men to make peace with their penises. It's fine as it is. If you can enjoy what you've got, you'll be a happier lover, which will probably make you a better lover.”

If you still think yours is inadequate, consult a sex therapist. Find one near you at aasect.org, the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists, or sstarnet.org, the Society for Sex Therapy and Research.

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