

# Sexy sensations: The interplay of the senses in sexual attraction

October 25 2013, by Felicia Reed

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Credit: Matt Anderson Flickr Creative Commons

Our senses serve the purpose of relaying information about our environment back to the brain, where it is deconstructed, made sense of and then acted upon.

Some of this information may actually bypass our conscious awareness and have the ability to activate an emotional reaction, all without our knowing!

To continue with our series on the Sensational Brain, I'm going to take a look at how all 5 of the human senses may subtly contribute to the fine art of [sexual attraction](#).

## **Love at First... Sight**

It may come as no surprise that the eyes play the largest role in sexual attraction out of all of the senses. Research has revealed that we find facial and bodily symmetry most attractive, and suggests an inclination for us to be attracted to others who resemble our parents?

If you're looking to see if they're interested too, check out their pupils. Dilated pupils are a physiological response to sexual attraction.

## **Sound – Listen Up!**

The pitch of your voice may have an impact on your ability to attract a mate. As a female, unfortunately a deep come hitherto voice probably isn't going to work in your favour.

Studies suggest that men prefer women with a higher pitched voice, and conversely, women find lower voices more attractive in men.

This is probably because development of the voice box is influenced by the male sex hormone testosterone, with a lower voice in men indicating greater virility. A higher [voice](#) on the other hand resembles much lower testosterone and so is considered more feminine.

## **Smell – Sniffing Out a Mate**

Before we humans were into the whole kissing and hugging thing, we relied on our sense of smell to guide sexual attraction. We have the

ability to detect differences in genetic makeup through this [sense](#), with people being more attracted to the [smell](#) of those who are most genetically different to them. This is thought to be an adaptation to increase diversity and so improve the viability of the human species.

An even more bizarre ability we have is to detect through scent, fluctuations in morphological symmetry. Fluctuating Asymmetry as it is known, is our ability to identify "abnormalities" or deviations from the norm. A trait of this kind was thought to have evolved to ensure defective genes were removed from the gene pool.

## **Touch – it's all in the kiss**

Kissing. Well, that's an obvious one – but maybe not for our ancestors. The first documentation of a 'romantic' kiss came from a 1000 B.C Indian text called the Mahabarata.

Our lips contain many touch receptors, more than most other parts of the body. So kissing results in a heightened sensual experience, which plays a large role in sexual arousal. (Not only is kissing a display of affection, the sharing of saliva also allows for the transfer of testosterone from man to woman – thought to be involved in a greater sexual 'chemistry').

## **Taste – Love is like a Block of Chocolate**

Aphrodisiacs are foods (and also behaviours) that are thought to heighten [sexual arousal](#). As the research suggests, munching on a block of chocolate will lead to the release of endorphins, and might just get you in the mood for a bit of lovin'. Watermelon flesh and rind contains a compound that will increase blood flow to the extremities, with an effect not dissimilar to that of Viagra.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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