

Can watching porn make you better in bed?

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Does a predilection for porn mean bad news in bed? That's the conclusion of many clinicians and the upshot of anecdotal reports claiming a man's habit of viewing sex films can lead to problems getting or sustaining an erection.

But a new study from UCLA and Concordia University—the first to actually test the relationship between how much erotica [men](#) are watching and erectile function—shows that viewing sexual films is unlikely to cause erectile problems and may even help [sexual arousal](#).

The study, published in the online journal *Sexual Medicine*, was conducted by Nicole Prause, an associate research scientist in the Department of Psychiatry in the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, and Jim Pfaus, a professor in Concordia's Department of Psychology and Center for Studies in Behavioral Neurobiology.

The science of sex

Prause and Pfaus analyzed data, collected from 280 male volunteers during previous studies in Prause's lab, for the effect watching erotica has on sexual arousal.

All the men reported the average number of hours per week that they had viewed sex films—which ranged from zero to 25 hours—and also completed a questionnaire that measures levels of sexual desire.

Of the 280 volunteers, 127 of them had regular partners and completed the International Index of Erectile Function, a questionnaire that requires men to rate their experience with erectile function.

Participants also viewed films in the lab, showing a man and woman having consensual vaginal intercourse, and then reported their level of sexual arousal.

Increased viewing a turn-on

"When we analyzed the data from these prior studies, we found that the men who had watched more sex films at home were more aroused when they watched sex films in the lab," says Prause.

"While one could object that this was expected since they like sex films, the result is important because clinicians often claim that men get desensitized by watching these films," she says.

"They are responding more strongly to very vanilla erotica than the guys for whom the films are more novel. While this association doesn't establish a cause, it proves viewing erotica at home is not desensitizing and perhaps even sensitized the men to respond more strongly."

Porn ≠ penis problems

Prause and Pfaus also found that there is no relationship between viewing sex films and the incidence of [erectile dysfunction](#) in men who are sexually active.

"Many clinicians claim that watching erotica makes men unable to respond sexually to 'normal' sexual situations with a partner," Prause says. "That was not the case in our sample."

"While many people think easy access to porn leads to problems in the bedroom, our study suggests the opposite: that erectile dysfunction is most likely caused by the same issues that have been known for some time, such as performance anxiety, poor cardiovascular health, or side-effects from substance abuse," says Concordia's Pfaus.

Prause agrees: "We have strong psychotherapy and [medical interventions](#) to help with erectile problems. These data suggest that inventing a new problem—porn causing erectile problems—for which there is no tested treatment, may be a disservice to patients," she says.

Relationship rescue

A larger issue concerns recent assertions that watching porn causes addiction and ruins relationships.

Pfaus says their data disputes those claims: "The study participants represent a good cross-section of men that view porn on a regular basis. The fact that doing so increased their arousal to the erotic stimuli should cause clinicians and sex therapists to rethink their attributions."

Prause agrees: "We have strong psychotherapy and medical interventions to help with erectile problems. These data suggest that inventing a new problem—porn causing erectile problems—for which there is no tested treatment, may be a disservice to patients," she says.

Provided by Concordia University

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