

Why science says you should have more sex

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On a health kick? Forget the juice cleanse—there is scientific evidence that a loving relationship and sex can be good for your wellbeing.

Curtin University sexual health expert Matt Tilley says sex that is a consensual, positive experience is likely to release feel-good hormones

such as endorphins and oxytocin in the brain.

"When we look at the function that those hormones might have then we can see that they assist to reduce stress, and of course endorphins specifically might act like a natural anti-depressant," he says.

Mr Tilley says sex can also enhance intimacy with one's partner.

"A regular sex experience with our partner, that's positive, is going to facilitate a connection," he says.

"Again we may have the function of oxytocin in there—or the love hormone as it's often referred to as—which can help facilitate people's love and trust of one another."

A brain workout is one thing, but could time in the sack count towards your daily quota of physical activity?

Kevin Netto, director of research at Curtin University's School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science, says sex is akin to moderate level exercise.

It causes heart rate rises, [systolic blood pressure](#) increases, [diastolic blood pressure](#) decreases and you sweat more.

"It's exactly the same benefits as doing a full body cardio work but the caveat being that you have to maintain it for long enough," A/Prof Netto says.

He says a French study found that the act of sex lasts for about 17 minutes on average "from whoa to go".

"For most people it's not long enough and it's not often enough," A/Prof

Netto says.

"Everybody should exercise for about half an hour to an hour each day because we lead such sedentary lifestyles...but if sex counts towards incidental exercise then that's great."

Sex bolsters mental health

Mr Tilley says sex and intimacy have also been linked to self-esteem, feeling better about ourselves and increased confidence.

"There's that understanding of ourselves as a sexual being who's able to satisfy our partner and is also able to derive pleasure ourselves," he says.

"Those feelings are likely to increase our sense of who we are and hence our self-esteem, and more broadly improve our mood or maybe just help maintain our elevated mood."

But, Mr Tilley cautions that any mood-boosting benefits of [sex](#) will only apply if it is a positive experience, otherwise the reserve is likely to be true.

"If it's not a positive experience and it's full of emotional blackmail or betrayal or it's a coercive or assaulting experience...it's going to be an absolute minefield of difficulty," he says.

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