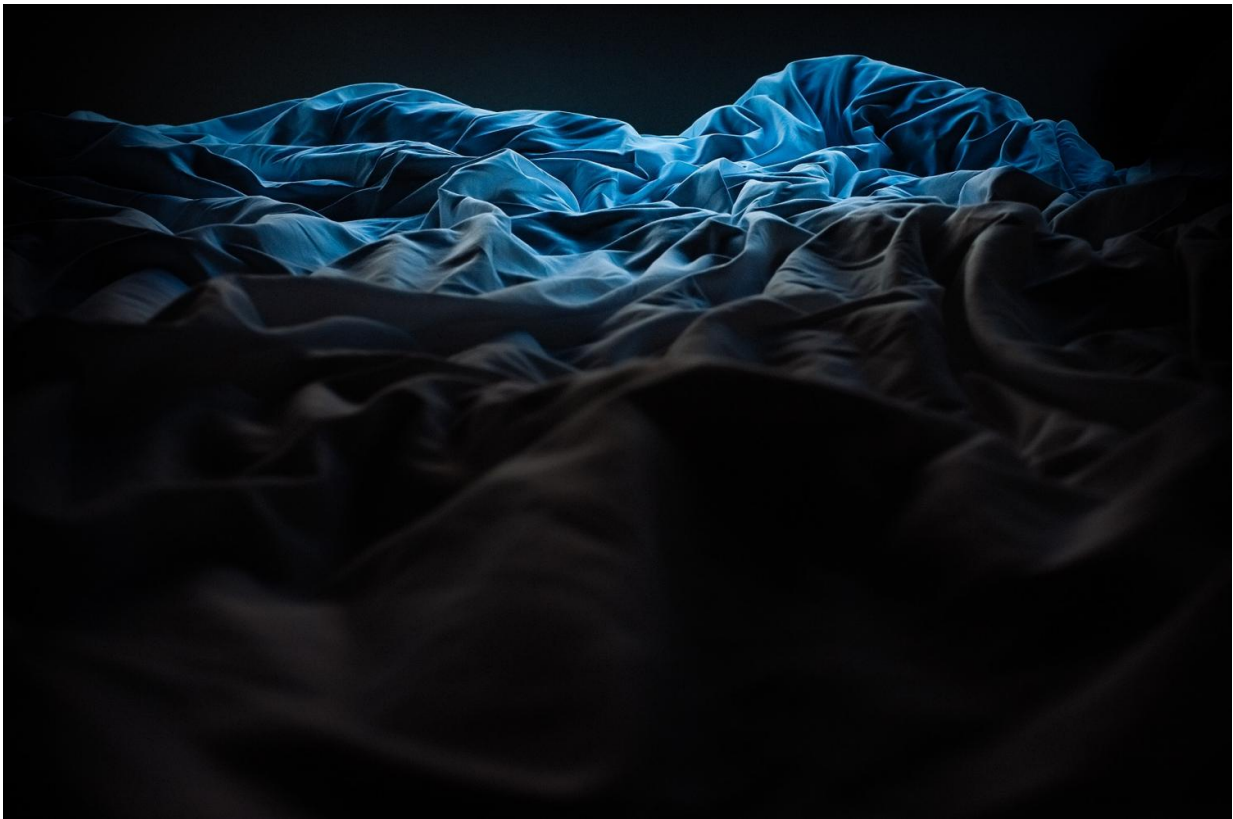


# Sex before sport doesn't negatively impact performance

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Over the course of the Rio Olympics, 450,000 condoms were distributed around the athlete's village. This may be surprising considering the common view that abstinence from sexual activity can boost athletic

performance.

These long-standing views have now been challenged by a recent analysis of current scientific evidence, published in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Physiology*.

"Abstaining from [sexual activity](#) before athletic competition is a controversial topic in the world of sport;" said Laura Stefani, an Assistant Professor of Sports Medicine at the University of Florence, Italy, and lead author of this review;"We show no robust [scientific evidence](#) to indicate that sexual activity has a negative effect upon athletic results."

The authors sifted through hundreds of studies with the potential to provide evidence, however big or small, on the impact of sexual activity upon sport performance. After setting a number of criteria to filter out the most reliable of these studies, only nine were included in the review.

One of these found that the strength of female former athletes did not differ if they had sex the night before. Another actually observed a [beneficial effect](#) on marathon runners' performance. While these small handful of studies provided some clues about the real effects of sex on sport performance, Dr. Stefani and her colleagues were disappointed with the research on this subject to date.

"We clearly show that this topic has not been well investigated and only anecdotal stories have been reported;" explained Dr. Stefani; "In fact, unless it takes place less than two hours before, the evidence actually suggests sexual activity may have a beneficial effect on sports performance."

The review also revealed that males were more frequently investigated than females, with no comparison of effects across genders. In addition,

it highlights that cultural differences in attitudes towards sexual activity may influence how much or how little impact it may have. Dr. Stefani emphasizes other factors that have been ignored.

"No particular importance has been laid on the psychological or physical effects of sexual activity on [sports performance](#), or upon the different kinds of sports."

This is an important point, given each sport's different mental and physical challenges.

This review demonstrates the need for proper scientific investigation into the impact of sexual activity on [sport performance](#), clarifying any ethical, gender and sport differences.

The authors conclude that because the current evidence debunks the long-held abstinence theories, athletes should not feel guilty when engaging in their usual sexual activity up to the day before competition.

**More information:** Laura Stefani et al, Sexual Activity before Sports Competition: A Systematic Review, *Frontiers in Physiology* (2016). [DOI: 10.3389/fphys.2016.00246](#)

Provided by Frontiers

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