IN THIS CHAPTER

- Understanding the importance of sexual pleasure
- Getting the sexual information you're probably missing
- Exploring the body parts that make sex fun

Chapter 1
Discovering Sexual Pleasure

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If your curiosity led you to pick up this book, then it's safe to assume that you want more sexual pleasure in your life. Good for you! Regardless of whether you're new to sex or have a long sexual history, I guarantee that there are things about sexual pleasure that you don't know, never thought to research, or didn't realize were important. As a sex coach with ten years of experience helping my clients have better sex, I'm not only well-equipped to help you learn all there is to know about sexual pleasure, but I'm absolutely ecstatic to be your guide.

Sex is a subject that most of us feel like we should be experts in before we're given enough information to gain that expertise. We also live in an era of serious misinformation about what makes sex good. For example, it's easier to find bad sex advice from nonexperts on social media than it is to locate solid, fact-based information from sexuality professionals (blame the algorithms).

The pressure to be good at sex, combined with inadequate sex education and the abundance of misleading or unhelpful sexual information, means that there are a lot of missed opportunities for sex to be as pleasurable as it could be.

In this chapter, you'll learn why sexual pleasure is so important to understand from a cultural and physiological perspective. You'll identify what was missing from your sexual education that could seriously be impacting your experience of sexual pleasure. And you'll become a pleasure anatomy expert.

Discovering Why Sexual Pleasure Matters

If you ask people why they have sex, among the top responses will be "Because it feels good!" I think this is a perfectly reasonable answer. Sex feels good by design. Our bodies were built for pleasure, as you'll see later when I go into detail about pleasure anatomy.

Evolutionarily and biologically speaking, pleasure is an incentive for keeping the human race going. If doing the thing that has the potential to make more humans felt bad or unpleasant, it would be a hard sell and frankly none of us would be here today. The majority of sex is just for funzies, though, and doesn't or can't result in a tiny human. This is where things get tricky.

Over time, we've decided that the highest purpose of sex is to make those tiny humans. That doesn't mean we can't enjoy ourselves while doing so, but pleasure is often seen as less important than this high cause. Reproduction is truly astounding, but again, most of us will have way more sex in our lifetime that doesn't lead to it. So why this concerted effort to separate sex from pleasure?

The first reason is the religious belief that sex should take place in service of a family unit. Many religions teach different interpretations of this, but in general the idea is that sex should be procreative in nature and therefore between two people who have the equipment to make that process happen. How you feel having this kind of sex is secondary because you are fulfilling your life's purpose.

The second reason that pleasure has often been divorced from the act of sex is to dissuade the youth, with their raging hormones and primal drive to copulate, to slow their roll and not make babies. In school, sex education is meant to prepare students to have responsible sex in a loving relationship in some distant future, when their prefrontal lobes have developed and

they are more financially secure. To include information in their education on the matter about how pleasurable sex is might derail this objective.



REMEMBER

I probably don't have to tell you that people from all kinds of religious backgrounds enjoy having sex that doesn't lead to babies, and just because we don't mention pleasure as part of sex education, young people still do a fine job of figuring out that sex is a lot of fun. Still, this anti-pleasure messaging has an impact.

What we miss out on when we ignore or downgrade the importance of sexual pleasure is the opportunity to frame sex, which is a foundational part of our humanity, as something that should take into account the enjoyment of all parties involved.

Further, when there is fear inherent in how we teach young people about their bodies, that can stay with them for a lifetime. Focusing on what makes sex good and emphasizing that it should be pleasurable ascribes a different kind of personal responsibility to sex. It's important to see sexual pleasure as valuable, but also as something to be actively working toward.

That's why in this book, I'll shine a light on the most pleasurable aspects of sex that are often overlooked in sex ed. If you've been curious about sex toys, I cover all of your options in Chapter 4. And if you want to know what kind of porn or erotica is out there and what all the fuss is about masturbation, Part 2, "Discovering Your Own Sexual Pleasure," will give you the necessary details. Aside from the nuts and bolts of sexual pleasure, I'm going to share ways to understand yourself as a sexual being, which is something that most of us never get the opportunity to do meaningfully.

Filling in the Gaps of Sex Education

You probably didn't receive comprehensive sex education. What you got was likely a mix of reproductive health (the birds and the bees) and pregnancy/STI prevention education. In other words, a whole lot of "Don't do it!" and not a lot of "When (not if) you do it, here's how to have the best possible time."

Many sex educators and sexologists have advocated for pleasure-first, comprehensive sex education, but what would that even look like? Well, to start, it would acknowledge that the majority

of young people will have partnered sex in their lifetime, and it would emphasize making the decision to have sex when you feel ready, safe, and with someone you trust.

It would start much younger and provide age-appropriate information about bodies, menstruation, hormones, and sexual development. It also would include porn literacy education, which would help students distinguish between sexual entertainment and reality (something you'll read more about in Chapter 7). It would teach consent and allow students to engage in meaningful role plays of consent conversations. It would emphasize the importance of listening to your partner and not taking feedback as an attack or a threat.

It would help students identify the warning signs of intimate partner abuse. And it would encourage being an active participant in your and your partners' sexual health by staying up to date on STI screenings, having disclosure conversations with new partners, and always using safer sex practices like barrier methods.

If that all feels like a lot, it is! There is so much more to learn about sex than simply where the penis goes, how not to get pregnant, preventing STI transmission, and how awkward it is to hear your gym teacher say "erection." If it seems far-fetched to have this kind of sex ed, know that there are countries like the Netherlands that have implemented sex ed starting as early as preschool that builds each year in tandem with children's development.

A big part of understanding sexual pleasure is acknowledging that our sexual development is ongoing and doesn't just end at puberty. The nature of life is to change, and we need different things to accommodate these changes. But if you aren't prepared for change then you won't know when it's appropriate to make adjustments that can maximize sexual pleasure. The gaps in our sex education don't magically get filled in; in fact, the amount we don't know can grow as we enter different stages of life. I'll talk more about this in Part 5, "Embracing Changes."

This book is meant to fill in many of the gaps created by our culture's inability to provide the kind of sound sex education every adult deserves to have. Let's start first by centering pleasure when we discuss the body parts involved in sex.

Uncovering Pleasure Anatomy

In Chapter 9, you'll learn why your brain is actually your biggest sex organ, responsible for your Sexual Response Cycle, fantasizing, and overthinking, but this doesn't take away from the fact that certain body parts are essential for sexual pleasure.

"Genitals" is a fun word to say, but it doesn't do a great job of explaining what makes these areas of the body so pleasurable. In fact, you may not have seen an anatomical model or illustration that properly identified the most pleasure-inducing parts of your body. I'm here to change that for you by introducing you to *pleasure anatomy*.

Pleasure anatomy includes the parts of the body involved to some degree in your body's sexual arousal and response (including orgasm). When you know your and your partner's pleasure anatomy intimately, there's no need to memorize sexual positions or have "ten things to drive them wild" in your sexual repertoire. Instead, you'll focus on the right spots and see how your partner responds to certain types of stimulation.



TIP

Everyone's body is different. Take your time to identify your partner's unique pleasure anatomy, and don't be afraid to ask for feedback. "Do you like that?" is a great and sexy question. And don't be afraid to guide your partner around your pleasure anatomy and give feedback like "I like a little more/less pressure." I talk about how to give sexual feedback in Chapter 19.

Celebrating the clitoris

In the realm of pleasure anatomy, the clitoris reigns supreme. I say this because it is the only part of our anatomy (found on people with vulvas) whose sole purpose is pleasure. She literally has no other job to do.

Historically, the clitoris was identified as an external structure only and was often referred to as a "pea" or "button." It wasn't until 1998 when the full structure of the clitoris was mapped, revealing that only about 10% was external. Yet that 10%, which is called the *glans*, is mighty. It houses about 10,000 nerve fibers. Compare that to about 8,000 nerve fibers in the entire penis.

Like penises, clitorises get erect when stimulated or as a result of general sexual arousal without direct stimulation. And when they are erect, they make vulvas a super sexy place to be.

Take a look at how much real estate the clitoris takes up (see Figure 1-1)!

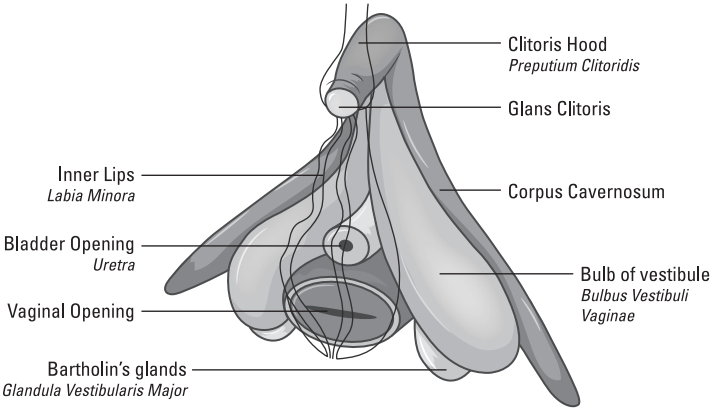

FIGURE 1-1: Anatomy of the clitoris.

Keep in mind that just because the glans has the most nerve fibers, the entire clitoral structure becomes erect and sensitive to touch and therefore a massive source of sexual pleasure. If you have a vulva, I highly recommend identifying as many parts of your pleasure anatomy as you can using a hand mirror and the illustration provided as a guide.



REMEMBER

Because the structure of the clitoris is both external and internal, stimulating it can happen both places too. In fact, many people with vulvas find the combination of both internal and external stimulation to be a major route to pleasure.

Demystifying the G-spot

You've probably heard tale of the elusive G-spot. Maybe you have a toy meant to stimulate it, or maybe you've had partnered sex that seemed to reach it. Well, I'm here to take some of the guesswork out of this piece of pleasure anatomy.

First, the area known as the Gräfenberg or "G-spot" is about an inch or two just inside the vaginal opening on the anterior (top)

wall (see Figure 1-2). There's tissue there that becomes engorged during arousal and can feel ribbed or spongy to the touch.

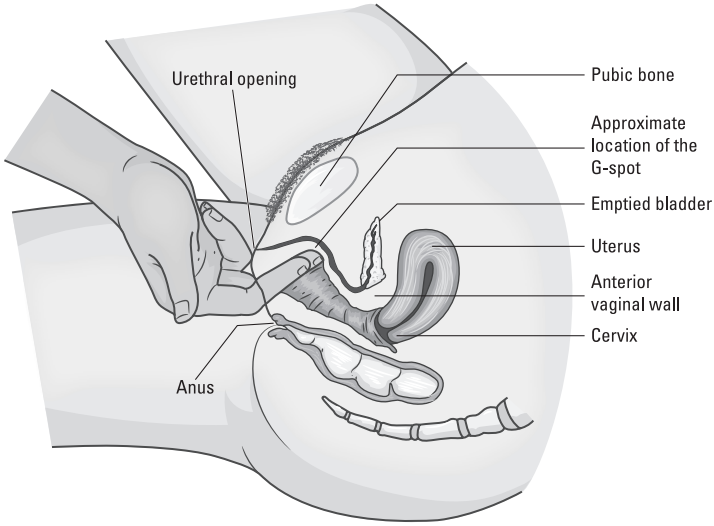

FIGURE 1-2: Location of the G-spot.

Stimulating this area of the vagina feels nice and can amp up sexual pleasure on its own, but it can also trigger a response from a couple of nearby glands. Skene's glands, often referred to as the female prostate, help with lubricating the vagina. These glands also produce the fluid secreted during squirting and female ejaculation. The sensation associated with these experiences is like having to pee. Not everyone will feel this or experience squirting or ejaculation because of anatomy variability, but exploring the general pleasure of stimulating the G-spot to see what it can do for you or your partner is definitely worth it.

Befriending the frenulum

Penises get a bad rap for being sexually straightforward (pun intended). But do you know about the frenulum? It's the V-shaped band of tissue on the underside of the penis shaft that connects the foreskin to the glans (or head) of the penis (see Figure 1-3). If you've been circumcised, this part of the penis is always visible and if not, it becomes more visible with the foreskin pulled back or when you have an erection.

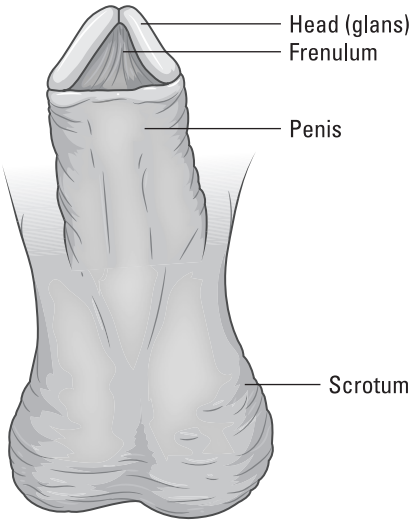

FIGURE 1-3: Location of the frenulum.

While there is a vast amount of nerve sensitivity throughout the foreskin, the frenulum is a source of pleasure whether or not you have foreskin because there is a bundle of nerves there that responds to both light and deep pressure.



TIP

If you're nervous around penises or feel shy handling your partner's, just focus on the frenulum with your hand or mouth to heighten their arousal. Don't neglect the rest of the shaft, but you don't need to be a deep throat pro to deliver plenty of pleasure to your partner's penis.



REMEMBER

Pleasure anatomy is diverse and comes in all shapes and sizes. Intersex (people with any of several sex characteristics) people's pleasure anatomy may not exactly reflect what you see in the illustrations here. This is also true for those who undergo feminizing or masculinizing hormone therapy. Our pleasure anatomy can also change shape and size after childbirth and as we age.

Praising the prostate

The male prostate is a gland located just below the bladder and in front of the rectum in people with penises (Figure 1-4). Its main sexual function is to provide seminal fluid for ejaculation. It also helps propel fluid forward during ejaculation.

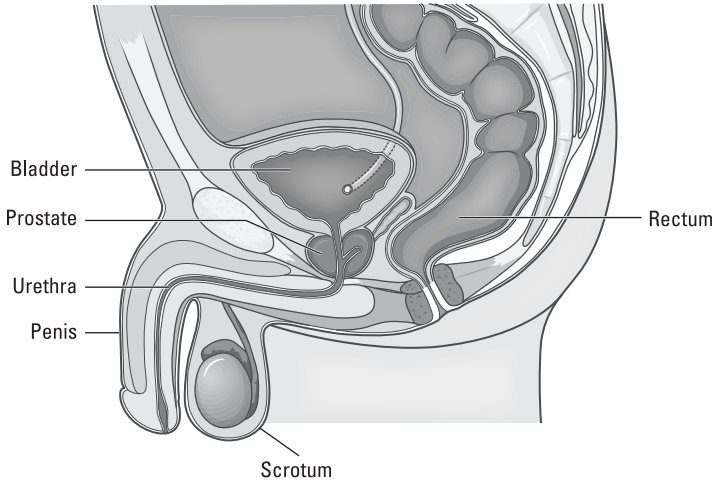

FIGURE 1-4: Location of the prostate.

Because the prostate is located behind the rectum, it can be stimulated during anal penetration or by pressing externally on the *perineum* (the skin between the scrotum and the anus). Both methods of stimulation can be immensely pleasurable, so much so that it's sometimes referred to as the "male G-spot" or "P-spot" stimulation. Because of the concentration of nerve endings surrounding the prostate, stimulation can trigger an orgasm. It's also a way to intensify sexual pleasure while stimulating the penis.

Baring other fun bits

You may have picked up on the theme that the places where our bodies derive the most sexual pleasure are where there are collections of nerves. But as you'll learn in Part 3, "Creating a Path to Pleasure," our entire bodies can become sources of sexual pleasure during arousal.

There are certain areas of the body where this is most pronounced. Working our way down the body, here are some other areas that can provide sexual pleasure:

- Earlobes
- Necks

- Breasts and nipples
- Butts
- Thighs
- Feet and toes



TIP

Knowing which areas to focus on and getting feedback from your partner about the areas of their body that light up the most is a sure-fire way to increase sexual pleasure.

Our bodies provide a valuable map to sexual pleasure. Though we're all different and have our own sexual needs, the pleasure anatomy layout provides places to start (and hopefully finish!) with our partners.



REMEMBER

You don't need to know how to do that "one weird trick." You just have to follow the signs that are laid out before you, listen to your partner, and lean into the kinds of stimulation of their pleasure anatomy that sends them into orgasmic bliss.

Knowing areas of sensitivity on your own body can help you explore sexual pleasure by yourself or provide your partner with precious information about what brings you the most enjoyment.

If you're still feeling sheepish about things, we're just getting started. There's more to learn about sexual pleasure that you were never taught before, and I'm so excited for you to learn.