

Facts about Personal Lubricant

Adapted from the work of Megan Andelloux, ohmegan.com, with appreciation

Why use lubricant?

- To reduce uncomfortable friction due to low natural lubrication in vulva, vagina or anus/rectum.
- To increase sensation with condom use. A little drop of lube inside a male condom increases sensation. Outside, it increases comfort and reduces the risk of breakage.
- To increase slipperiness with sex toys or manual stimulation.
- To encourage genital stimulation, thus increasing the likelihood the body will self lubricate.
- For use as a sex toy – some people enjoy the slippery feeling during sex play

Why do many women need artificial lubrication?

Natural lubrication is produced by glands within the labia and in the vaginal walls. The amount of natural lubrication is affected by level of arousal, hormonal changes, medications that decrease vaginal lubrication, e.g., antihistamines, hormonal forms of birth control, ADHD medications, depression medications, and chemotherapy. Breast-feeding and menopause can also decrease vaginal lubrication.

Can lubricant make anal sex comfortable?

The anus and rectum lack natural lubrication, and the addition of lubricant moisturizes tissues to decrease the likelihood of injury from penetration by fingers, a penis or toys. Condoms should be used as well as lubricant. Use a new condom if you switch from anal play and to oral or vagina play to reduce bacteria transmission. The best lubricants for anal play are Pre and Wet Platinum.

Cautions

Lubricant does not protect against sexually transmitted infection or the spread of bacteria; therefore, it does not replace the need for condoms or dental dams during sexual contact.

Products containing lidocane or benzocane reduce the gag-reflect during deep oral sex and/or eliminate pain during anal play; however, pain is an essential signal that you may need to adapt your activity to prevent tearing and lower the risk of transmission of infections. During oral sex, the gag reflex helps prevent fluid from being deposited into the lungs.

Buying lubricant

Lubricants are sold at pharmacies, adult stores, by mail order and online. Consider in advance what type of sex play you will have because certain lubes work better for certain types of sex (e.g., for oral sex, a flavored lube might be preferred).

If you are a woman with cancer and find that these lubricants do not give you enough comfort, either daily or with sex play, speak with your healthcare provider about very low dose topical estrogen. This is safe for most patients, even those who have had estrogen sensitive cancers, because the treatment is local and does not affect the whole body.

Types of lubricants

Petroleum-based

The easiest lubrication to get, but it takes a while to clear out of the body due to its viscosity.

Types: Mineral Oil, Vaseline, Stroke 29, Jack Off

Negatives: Irritates vulvas, DESTROYS LATEX CONDOMS, stains fabric.

Positives: Great for external male masturbation, cheap and easily accessible.

Natural oil-based

If you can eat it, it's safe to go inside the vagina. The body can clear out natural oils more easily than it can clear petroleum-based lubricants.

Types: Vegetable/Corn/Avocado/Peanut/Olive oils.

Negatives: DESTROYS LATEX CONDOMS, stains fabric.

Positives: Great for genital massage, safe for the vagina, safe to eat, good for all forms of sexual play, cheap, accessible.

Water-based *with* glycerine

Most commonly sold lubricants in supermarkets/drug stores are water-based with synthetic glycerin, which can trigger yeast infections in some women. Most flavored and warming lubricants contain glycerin.

Types: Astroglide, KY Liquid/Jelly, Embrace, Frixxion, Wet, Good Head, Wet Flavors ID.

REPLENS and Liquibeads treat chronic dryness and must be used daily, regardless of sexual activity.

Negatives: Dries out fast, often sticky or tacky, may trigger yeast infections.

Positives: Most recommended, easy to find, cheap, non-staining, safe to use with latex condoms.

Water-based *without* glycerine

Best for women with recurrent yeast infections. May contain vegetable-derived glycerin, which does not trigger yeast infections.

Types: Maximus, Liquid Silk, Slippery Stuff, Oh My, Sensual Organics, Probe, Nearly Me. Pre-Seed and Pré are designed for couples trying to conceive.

Negatives: May taste bitter due to the absence of glycerin; usually only found at adult stores or online.

Positives: Lasts longer than lubricants with glycerin, can reduce genital irritation, non-staining, and safe with latex condoms. Usually thicker, provides a cushion.

Silicone

Long-lasting, safe for use with condoms. Does not penetrate the skin. To be a silicone lubricant, lubes must contain these 3 ingredients: cyclopentasiloxane, dimethicone, dimethiconol.

Types: Eros, Wet Platinum, ID Millennium, Pink, Gun Oil

Negatives: Expensive, cannot use with silicone or Cyber Skin sex toys, may be difficult to find (online or adult stores only), must be washed off with soap and water if too much is used.

Positives: A little goes a long way, great for sensitive genitals, safe for condoms and internal use, stays on underwater, odorless and tasteless, lasts 3 times longer than water-based lubricants.

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