Female ejaculation

Written by Dr David Delvin, GP

Dr David Delvin explains why the phenomenon of female ejaculation causes distress to many women – though really it's a quite normal phenomenon.

What is female ejaculation?

Female ejaculation is a controversial subject.
Female ejaculation is a phenomenon in which fluid shoots out of the vulva or vagina at the moment of orgasm. It is sometimes known as 'she-jaculation'. You may have heard the terms 'gushing' or 'squirting'.
It's a controversial subject, not least because pornography writers (most of whom are male) have repeatedly suggested that all women ejaculate at orgasm. This is completely untrue!
Even today, some erotic novels give the impression that every woman produces a jet of fluid when she climaxes – just like a man. As a result, some younger males are puzzled if their partner doesn't.
Currently porn films often feature sequences of alleged female ejaculation, on the grounds that many men find it exciting. But the British Board of Film Classification still refuses to issue a certificate to any film that claims to show female ejaculation.
Their justification for this is that female ejaculation 'does not exist; so the fluid must be urine'. And, almost unbelievably, the BBFC does not allow shots of urine.

How common is female ejaculation?

The reality is that regular ejaculation isn't all that common. Some women do it once in a lifetime, but never again.
The actual percentage of females who ejaculate is uncertain. However, in Masters and Johnson's famous lab experiments with over 400 women, they did not record anyone who ejaculated at climax.
Nevertheless, the experience of gynaecologists and family planning doctors indicates there is a substantial minority of women who do ejaculate regularly.
One of the more convincing assessments is that of Stanislav Kratochvil (1994), who found that about 6 per cent of Czech women reported ejaculating. Our own recent researches suggest that the percentage of women who have ever ejaculated may be much higher.
Agony aunts get many anguished emails from females who are deeply embarrassed by the fact they wet the bed when they come.

How much fluid is produced?

I have heard claims that highly-sexed women can produce litres of fluid in a single orgasm. This seems very unlikely – after all, where could such an amount be stored in the female body?
More realistic is the estimate of Beverley Whipple, American sex guru and co-author of the original G-spot book. At a recent conference, she told me that in most cases, the amount of fluid secreted is usually around 'half a coffee cupful'.

What effect does it have on women?

When a woman first discovers that she suddenly drenches the sheets when she climaxes, it's natural for her to feel anxious and embarrassed. And because most women initially think the fluid they produce is urine, they may assume what they are doing is 'dirty' or 'nasty'.

Their feelings are – quite understandably – linked to childhood prohibitions about not wetting the bed. Unsurprisingly, quite a lot of these women tend to go through life avoiding sexual relations with other people. Some have the unfortunate experience of going to bed with men who react negatively when they climax – but fortunately that is not the reaction of most males.

Is female ejaculation caused by urine leakage?

Until the 1980s, most doctors who were aware of the phenomenon of ejaculation used to assume the fluid must be urine. As a treatment, they would tend to recommend exercises to build up the pelvic muscles. And many women do leak a little urine during sex and during other activities as well. This is called 'stress incontinence' and it happens to vast numbers of females when they sneeze, cough or laugh. It is particularly common in those who have had children. However, when urine leaks during sex, it's often during foreplay or vigorous intercourse rather than at orgasm.

In 1982 the publication of a highly influential book by US sex experts Whipple, Perry and Ladas changed these views. They suggested the fluid wasn't urine, but was instead a 'juice' secreted by glands that were said to be the equivalent of the male prostate.

What research has been done on the fluid?

There hasn't been enough research on the fluid (ejaculate) – partly because it's difficult to obtain adequate supplies of it for investigation. Also, large scientific funds tend to be available for life-threatening diseases rather than for sexual problems.

However, recent research suggests the ejaculate is an alkaline liquid that isn't like urine, because it doesn't contain urea or creatinine, which are normal urinary constituents. The fluid tends to be clear coloured and doesn't stain bedclothes yellow – again, unlike urine. Researchers have claimed that it contains some chemical ingredients similar to those produced by the male prostate – notably PSA (prostate-specific antigen). It is also said to contain two sugars: glucose and fructose.

Since 2000, an increasing number of researchers have suggested the liquid may be the secretion of Skene’s glands (the paraurethral glands). These are tiny structures which lie around the female urethra (the urinary pipe). In 2007, Viennese researcher Dr Florian Wimpissinger published an important study on two women who habitually ejaculated. (Incidentally, this surname is not some sort of joke! Dr Wimpissinger genuinely is a well-known urologist in Vienna.) He and his colleagues found that the ejaculate from these two females was chemically very different from that of their urine.

In particular, it contained more prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), more prostate-specific antigen (PSA), and also some glucose.

Is female ejaculation connected with the G-spot?

A vast amount of material on the internet suggests there is such a phenomenon as a G-spot orgasm, which is likely to be accompanied by a gush of fluid from the urethra. The G-spot is said to be an erotic zone at the front of the vagina, and this area is intimately connected with the urethra. Indeed, pressure on the G-spot area will invariably produce a desire to pee.

There is no doubt that pressing on the area of the G-spot would affect the above-mentioned Skene’s glands, which are said by some to be the source of female ejaculate. However, much of what has been written over the last 25 years about the alleged link between the G-spot and female ejaculation is unscientific and has not be proven.

For example, there is no clear evidence that pressure on your G-spot will make you produce female ejaculatory fluid.
What does this mean for women?
It's now evident that a substantial minority of women do ejaculate when they climax. This could be urine in some cases, but in other cases it seems that it isn't.
Clearly, much more research needs to be done on the contentious subject of female ejaculation, and on the nature of the fluid.
Finally, women who experience ejaculation should realise that they needn't feel ashamed of it, and that many partners have a pretty positive attitude towards it.
In other words, a lot of male (or indeed, female) partners like it. If a woman ejaculates, her man may well regard it as a tribute to his virility and skill in bed! isn't.

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How to help your female partner have orgasms: what is a female orgasm?
Sex therapy: here's a list of the organisations to approach.

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