

Study examines effect of water-based and silicon-based lubricant

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A new study by sexual health researchers at Indiana University found that women who used lubricant during sex reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction and pleasure.

The study, involving 2,453 women, is the largest systematic study of this kind, despite the widespread commercial availability of lubricant and the gaps in knowledge concerning its role in alleviating pain or contributing to other health issues.

"In spite of the widespread availability of [lubricants](#) in stores and on the Internet, it is striking how little research addresses basic questions of how personal lubricants contribute to the sexual experience," said Debby Herbenick, associate director of the Center for [Sexual Health Promotion](#). "These data clearly show that use of the lubricants in our study was associated with higher ratings of sexual pleasure and satisfaction and low rates of genital symptoms."

While these findings, reported in the November issue of the "*Journal of Sexual Medicine*," involve the use of water-based and silicone-based lubricant, researchers also found that study participants reported fewer genital symptoms -- and, in particular, fewer reports of genital pain -- when they used a water-based lubricant.

Michael Reece, director of the Center for Sexual Health Promotion and co-author of the study, said public health professionals have long recommended the use of lubricants as an important safer sex tool,

particularly when used with latex condoms.

"These findings help us to reinforce to sexually active individuals that not only are lubricants important to safer sex but that they also contribute to the overall quality of one's sexual experiences," he said.

Here are some of the findings:

- More than 70 percent of the time that lubricant was used for vaginal or anal intercourse, study participants indicated that they did so in order to make sex more pleasurable; more than 60 percent of women indicated this was the case during masturbation.
- More than one third of the time that lubricant was used for vaginal sex, anal sex or masturbation, women indicated that they used lubricant because it was fun to do so.
- Sizable proportions of women also indicated that they chose to use lubricant in order to reduce the risk of tearing, particularly for anal intercourse.

For the study, "Association of Lubricant Use with Women's Sexual Pleasure, Sexual Satisfaction, and Genital Symptoms: A Prospective Daily Diary Study," 2,453 women ages 18-68 participated in an Internet-based, double-blind assessment of the use of six lubricants during solo masturbation and partnered sexual activities. Women were randomly assigned to use one of six lubricants, four of which were water-based lubricants and two of which were silicone-based lubricants, during two weeks of a five-week study period.

Analyses of more than 10,000 acts of penile-vaginal intercourse, and

more than 3,000 masturbation experiences, showed that participants' ratings of sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction were significantly higher when a water-based lubricant or silicone-based lubricant was used compared to sex without a lubricant. Far fewer penile-anal intercourse events occurred; however, ratings of sexual pleasure and satisfaction were significantly higher when water-based lubricant was used during anal intercourse as compared to sex without a lubricant.

For all types of sex, genital symptoms were rarely reported and were generally less likely to occur when lubricant was used. More than half of the time that women used lubricant, they applied it to their own or their partner's genitals, or directly to their fingers and in about 10 percent of instances of vaginal intercourse, lubricant was applied directly to a sex toy.

"These findings demonstrate how lubricant can be used during foreplay or sex play with a partner, and incorporated into a couple's [sexual experience](#)," Herbenick said.

Provided by Indiana University

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