

Nipples stimulate the same area of the brain as genitals do

August 5 2011, by Deborah Braconnier

A new study published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* reveals medical evidence that women's nipples stimulate the brain in the same way that genital stimulation does, something most women already know.

A team of researchers at Rutgers University led by psychologist Barry Komisaruk, recruited 11 healthy women between the ages of 23 and 56. The women were placed in an fMRI scanner and asked to stimulate their cervix, nipple, clitoris and vagina with either a rhythmic finger tap or plastic dildo.

The [brain](#) images of the women revealed increased activity in the medial paracentral lobule for each area of stimulation, however each stimulated area was responsible for lighting up a specific region.

There are four nerves that bring signals to the brain from the genital region. The pudendal nerve is connected to the clitoris, the pelvic nerve to the vagina, the hypogastric nerve to the cervix and uterus and the vagus nerve which also connects the cervix.

Nipple stimulation during breast-feeding is known to cause the release of oxytocin which triggers uterine contractions and Komisaruk believes this then sends a signal to the genital area of the brain. However, the few men who have been studied under the same controls show similar activity to nipple stimulation. One of the study researchers is now also looking at women who have had a hysterectomy to see if the response is the same.

Komisaruk hopes that this new research will lead to information to help people who are unable to reach orgasm but is also looking at ways to use this pleasurable stimulation to directly control brain activity. According to Komisaruk, learning to better understand and control the part of the brain that produces pleasurable sensations could make a difference in the treatment of depression, anxiety, addiction or even obesity.

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