

◆ Using Pornography

People use pornography (porn) for a variety of reasons, but the most common reason is for pleasure and sexual arousal, and out of curiosity for some people. The majority of time porn is used as part of masturbation.

During lockdown many of us are stuck at home, unable to work, attend education or socialise, and many people are separated from their partners. Because of this, some people are finding themselves accessing porn more often, or even for the first time, as a way of relieving boredom or stress or just simply for pleasure.

Masturbation (“wanking” or sexually stimulating yourself) is a healthy sexual activity. It’s a natural and safe way to explore your body, feel pleasure, and release built-up sexual tension. It occurs amongst people of all backgrounds, genders, and races. Despite the myths, there are actually no physically harmful side effects. However if you’re masturbating excessively and you feel sore or it’s become painful you should speak to your GP. If excessive masturbation is causing you to feel guilty, it’s affecting your relationship or getting in the way of your day to day life, then it might be a good idea to speak to a therapist, trusted friend or GP. Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after. If you use a shared computer, phone or touch screen whilst masturbating be sure to disinfect these devices thoroughly.

Choosing whether or not to watch porn is a personal choice. Some people feel very positive about watching porn, find it enjoyable, exciting and relaxing, and for some it can improve their relationship with their sexual partner/s, to their body or to their sexuality. It can be a way to explore your sexuality and find out what you like and don’t like. Other people have a very negative relationship to porn and find it uncomfortable or even objectionable.

As with many things, watching porn has its pros and cons so if you find yourself looking at porn while you masturbate, these might be some important things to consider:

◆ What’s the Law around porn?

The law around porn is quite complex but there are some key things to keep in mind.

- ◇ Firstly, it is **against the law to show porn to someone under the age of 18**, this includes sending them a link to porn or sending them nudes.
- ◇ It’s against the law to create, download, keep or send porn that involves someone who doesn’t or legally can’t consent to what’s happening e.g. someone aged under 18. In fact, material like this isn’t ‘porn’, we call it **child abuse imagery**.
- ◇ It’s also against the law to send or upload sexual photos or videos of someone else without their consent, no matter their age. This is called ‘**revenge porn**’.
- ◇ Even though it’s technically against the law for someone under the age of 18 to take or keep sexual photos and videos of themselves, the law protects young people coming forward for support where sexual pictures of them have been sent on without their permission. The laws around porn aren’t intended to criminalise young people, but to **protect young people from others with bad intentions**.

◆ Is porn sex the same as real life sex?

Porn sex is exaggerated because it’s generally designed to look good for the camera, rather than feel good for the people participating. If you choose to watch porn, it’s worth bearing in mind that what you are watching generally doesn’t bare much resemblance to sex that might happen in real life.

Porn very rarely includes conversations about consent and protection or messy or embarrassing moments. In between takes make-up and hair is touched up and clothes are adjusted.

We should also bear in mind that what people like to watch isn’t necessarily what they would like to happen in real life.

Using Pornography during Lockdown (cont)

◆ **Porn and Body Image**

Some people feel like porn use can negatively impact their body image, although for other people it's the opposite. If you feel like your self-confidence is being affected negatively by porn, you could consider choosing what you watch more carefully, e.g. choosing porn that celebrates your body type, or stopping watching all together. If you are having issues with body image, it can be very beneficial to talk to someone you trust.

◆ **Can porn affect relationships?**

Using porn can have either a positive or negative affect on relationships. Some people enjoy watching porn together and some people enjoy watching porn alone. Either way it has to be your decision. If you're in a romantic or sexual relationship, you might want to consider how the other person feels about watching porn together or about you watching porn alone. As with most things, open and honest communication can really help.

◆ **Is there such a thing as ethical porn?**

Ethical porn can be defined as porn which is made legally, respects the rights of performers, has good working conditions, fair pay, shows consent being sought, shows both fantasy and real-world sex and celebrates sexual diversity. Some free porn streaming sites can make it difficult to know whether or not the porn has been produced ethically. If you pay for porn you are much more likely to be able to access the performer consent policy and get the non-porn content which shows e.g. behind the scenes and after performance interviews with the performers. Everyone has very different feelings about porn, but if you do choose to access porn, and you would like the porn you watch to be ethically produced, then it can be helpful to do your research so you're accessing it from websites you trust.

◆ **Should I feel guilty about watching porn?**

Your personal feelings are of the utmost importance. If you feel happy with using porn, and you don't feel that it's negatively impacting your life, your self-esteem or your relationship, then great! If you feel worried about your use of porn, feel that you're reliant on it, have negative thoughts about it or feel that it's affecting your relationships or your ability to start a relationship, then you might want to talk it through with your GP, a trusted friend or a counsellor.

◆ **Support and Information**

[NSPCC](#)

[MIND- Types of Mental Health problems](#)

[Relate - Relationship help– COVID 19 Advice & Information](#)

[NHS- Can you become addicted to sex?](#)

[Young Minds– Body Image](#)

[Internet Watch Foundation: Report child abuse imagery so it can be removed](#)

[The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command: Report online abuse](#)

[STOP IT NOW: Confidential help if you or someone you know is accessing inappropriate content online](#)