

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Masturbation involves stimulating one's genitals to achieve sexual pleasure
- Self-abuse is masturbation
- John Harvey Kellogg is an American medical doctor
- J.H Kellogg made important observations and bold statements about masturbation
- This activity is one of the most damaging of all forms of sexual vice
- A cross sectional survey indicated that young males masturbate more than young females
- As much as 90% to 94% of males and 50% to 60% of females report masturbating at some point in their life
- Self-abuse is a common practice
- Frequent masturbation may result in zinc deficiency
- Zinc deficiency is common in several psychiatric disorders including depression

# MASTURBATION

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM & PROVIDING THE SOLUTION

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### WHAT IS MASTURBATION?

In the 1800's, the most common phrase used to describe the stimulation of the genitals with the hand for sexual pleasure was the term self-abuse. Nowadays, we call this activity masturbation. Although back in earlier days this activity was generally condemned and infrequently discussed, the activity has become far less taboo and now a more readily accepted activity. John Harvey Kellogg, an American medical doctor who lived during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, referred to masturbation as "one of the most damaging of all forms of sexual vice" {Man, The Masterpiece, 1886}. Was this physician's bold statement correct? Is self-abuse or masturbation dangerous for our health? If it is bad for our health, what will help us stop abusing ourselves? These are just some of the questions that this article will aim to address.

### HOW PREVALENT IS THE PRACTICE OF MASTURBATION?

One cross sectional survey will give us a clue as to how common the practice of masturbation is. In the United States of America, a nationally representative cross sectional survey of adolescents aged 14- 17 years was conducted to better determine the prevalence, frequency and associations with partnered sexual behaviours. One of the outcome measures assessed was solo masturbation. The results indicated that across all age groups more males reported masturbation than females. As men aged, the occurrence of masturbation increased. According to other research, as much as 90% to 94% of males and 50% to 60% of females report masturbating at some point in their life. Clearly, masturbation is a common practice. So could this practice be damaging our bodies?

### IS MASTURBATION BAD FOR OUR HEALTH?

A pathological condition called penile lymphedema arises from abnormal retention of lymphatic fluid in the subcutaneous tissues. Due to the condition, there is subsequent inflammation, adipose tissue hypertrophy and fibrosis. According to a case report, a 40 year old man presented with chronic penile lymphedema. This man presented with moderate mental retardation, mild dysarthria, limb incoordination, anxiety, depressed mood and behavioral disturbances including compulsive masturbation. It is possible that his penile lymphedema resulted from chronic masturbation.

Ejaculate contains zinc. Chronic masturbation may result in zinc deficiency. This mineral deficiency is common in several psychiatric disorders including depression.

- Pathological penile lymphedema arises from abnormal retention of lymphatic fluid in the subcutaneous tissues resulting in inflammation, adipose tissue hypertrophy and fibrosis
- Discontinuing masturbation may contribute to maintaining a healthy heart
- Children may learn about masturbation while in school with their friends
- We should be careful about who are children associate with
- A diet which includes the consumption of animal products contributes to the indulgence of sexual activity
- Harmful condiments, rich food and spiced meals strengthen our desire for sexual activity

Dr. Kellogg noted in his writings that he had seen young male patients come to him with different heart diseases. When he carried out his examinations, the physical exams failed to show the characteristic evidences of common heart disorders. He conducted a search into the habits of his patients and found that many of them were habitual masturbators. On the doctor's orders, they discontinued the habit. Together with the application of proper measures of treatment, the patients recovered.

## WHAT CAUSES THIS HARMFUL PRACTICE?

### The First of All Causes:

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners  
{1 Corinthians 15:33, KJV}

Most often, those with untamed sexual passions have a tendency to impart their views and teach their depraved habits to others. An innocent child may attend public school and learn about it from his classmates. While ignorant of the nature of the vice, he falls an easy prey to it and becomes entangled in the habit. It could very well be that young children learn this habit from their associates at an early age and continue it through adolescence and into adulthood.

### Second of All Causes:

Ellen White, the most translated American author, wrote that "there is an alarming lethargy shown on the subject of unconscious sensualism. It is customary to eat the flesh of dead animals. This stimulates the lower passions of the human organism." {Counsels on Diet and Foods 389.4}

In another one of her books, Ellen wrote, "in their ignorance or carelessness, parents give their children the first lessons in intemperance. At the table, loaded with injurious condiments, rich food, and spiced knickknacks, the child acquires a taste for that which is hurtful to him, which tends to irritate the tender coats of the stomach, inflame the blood, and strengthen the animal passions. The appetite soon craves something stronger, and tobacco is used to gratify that craving. This indulgence only increasing the unnatural longing for stimulants, liquor drinking is soon resorted to, and drunkenness follows. This is the course of the great highway to intemperance." {Temperance 182.4}

By eating animal products, harmful condiments, rich food and spiced delicacies, we strengthen the animal passions which includes our desire for sexual excitement. In the Bible, specifically in the book of Genesis chapter three, we read about Adam and Eve's disobedience. Adam and Eve lost Eden through the indulgence of appetite, and we only regain it by the denial of the same.  
{See Temperance 150.3}



- Children may accidentally discover masturbation
- We should avoid inappropriate books and stop looking at sexually explicit material
- Frequently laying on the stomach may stimulate the genital organs
- A child who practices masturbation may become fretful, irritable and sullen
- Masturbators may experience a sudden decline in health without any acute illness or other apparent cause
- There are many helpful ways that will help stop self-abuse
- We should resist the urge to perform self-abuse

### **Other Causes:**

A plausible theory for children acquiring the habit of self-abuse could be accidental discovery due to local irritation of some sort which may produce an abnormal excitement of the genitals. This may arise from constipation, thread worms in the rectum or irritation arising from inattention to local cleanliness that provokes rubbing or scratching the area. Also, the reading of inappropriate books and gazing upon other sexually explicit material contributes to practicing masturbation. Frequently laying on the stomach may also cause excitement of the genital organs.

### **ARE THERE ANY NOTICEABLE SIGNS OF SELF ABUSE?**

In the following list, there is no single symptom that can be considered positive or conclusive evidence that a child or adult is practicing masturbation.

1. Change in Character: Example-A child who normally is cheerful, frank, energetic and obedient becomes without any obvious cause fretful, irritable and sullen. Ejaculate contains zinc. Frequent masturbation may cause a zinc deficiency. In a cross sectional study, researchers found an inverse relationship between the intake of zinc and symptoms of depression.
2. Sudden Decline in Health Without Any Acute Illness or Other Apparent Cause: As discussed earlier, there are psychological and physiological effects associated with masturbation.
3. Unnatural languor, lassitude, and dullness, especially in the morning. A healthy child is naturally active. Due to the frequent release of minerals from ejaculate, the child may suffer from mineral deficiency and as a result lack energy. This would also be true for adults.

### **WHAT WILL HELP US STOP HARMING OURSELVES?**

Ellen White wrote extensively about health. In her writings, she offers many helpful principles for overcoming bad habits.

1. With a firm purpose, resist the urge to perform the act. Turn from it with firm determination. {An Appeal to Mothers 22.2, Mind Character and Personality Volume 1 235.1}
2. Avoid the first approach to danger. {Mind Character and Personality Volume 1 237.3}
3. Do not dally with the temptation. Shun it immediately. {Mind Character and Personality Volume 1 231.5}
4. Make an entire reform in your life because every deviation is making recovery more hopeless. {An Appeal to Mothers 22.2}
5. With a close and severe effort, control your thoughts, your reading and your words. Shun vain and corrupt thoughts. {Child Guidance 464.3, 465.2}
6. Avoid reading and seeing things which will suggest impure thoughts. {Letters to Young Lovers 61.1}
7. Be a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears and all your senses. (Psalm 101:3) {Child Guidance 464.3}



- We should control our thoughts, reading and words
- We should be careful about what we watch and hear
- Prayer will help
- We should occupy our minds with good things
- We should think of Jesus and keep our minds focused on elevating subjects
- We should cherish the love of God in our hearts
- Do not consume animal products, spices, condiments, alcohol, tea, coffee and chocolate
- The Bible comforts and encourages those who are battling addictions
- Remember the Scripture “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”  
-Philippians 4:13

8. Prayer is a necessity. Daily prayer turns mistakes into victories. {Prayer 65.2, The Review and Herald, May 12, 1896}
9. In humility, entreat God for purity of thought, and a refined and sanctified imagination. {An Appeal to Mothers 22.2}
10. Occupy your mind with good things because impure thoughts lead to impure actions. {Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene 133.1, Mind Character and Personality Volume 1, 234.1}
11. Make Jesus Christ the theme of your contemplation and dwell upon elevating subjects. Focus on Jesus’ love and purity. {Mind Character and Personality Volume 1, 234.1, 235.3, 238.2}
12. Cherish the love of God in your heart. {Letters to Young Lovers 68.5}
13. Read your Bible attentively, prayerfully, and be guided by its teachings. This is your safety. {Child Guidance 465.2}
14. Do not consume animal products, spices and condiments, alcohol, tea, coffee and chocolate. Do not use tobacco. {Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene 154.2, Counsels on Diet and Foods 389.4, Temperance 182.4, The Present Truth, Volume 15 August 24, 1899, page 541 par 8, Education 202.2-.3, Counsels on Health 85.3}

## THERE IS HOPE

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.  
~1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. ~Hebrews 4:14-16, KJV

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:  
~1 John 2:1, KJV

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*“Although the patriarchs and apostles were subject to human frailties, yet through faith they obtained a good report, fought their battles in the strength of the Lord, and conquered gloriously. Thus may we trust in the virtue of the atoning sacrifice and be overcomers in the name of Jesus.”*  
--Conflict & Courage page 368.5, Ellen White

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