

Herald Sun
Sunday

BODY + soul



THE DEATH
OF THE DAGGY
GYM BAG
*(and its stylish
successor)*

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SKIN EVER**

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future
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obsession with con artists
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YOUR COOL IN
STRESSFUL
MOMENTS**

THE NEW SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Humans have been getting it on for eons, but if you feel like you're hearing more about sex of late, you'd be right. Here, *Body+Soul* talks to the experts about what's hot in the world of sexual wellness and discovers the latest trends and titillations aimed at empowering and bringing pleasure to us all

STORY CASSANDRA GREEN

A woman in a futuristic, metallic, copper-colored outfit with a large, ornate headpiece, posing against a background of faint, glowing geometric patterns.


A sexologist reveals the external pressure point that could lead to your best orgasm yet at

BOB+Body.com.au

Sexual exploration is officially reaching a climax. Largely driven by cultural attitudes and the perfect storm of our social and political climate shifting around us, we're getting curious and creative when it comes to exploring our intimate sides.

No longer shrouded in shame, intimacy has found the perfect environment for a revolution. Experts say this is largely thanks to a series of momentous socio-cultural events over the past five years: the #MeToo movement, the pandemic (which has given us more time to focus on ourselves), and a rebranding of sex from taboo to topical.

"#MeToo and #TimesUp empowered women to advocate for themselves and their sexuality, not just against sexual assault but also [for] their pleasure,"

says Bryony Cole, sextech expert at sexual wellness company the Lovehoney Group and host of *The Future Of Sex* podcast. "We saw a wave of female-focused sex toys, like the Womanizer, that focused on the clitoris, as society became more educated around the pleasure gap and the clitoris as a vehicle for pleasure."

Coupled with this new sense of empowerment and freedom came the pandemic, and months of forced hibernation. Meanwhile, a powerful rebrand of intimacy as a crucial part of our health

destigmatised sex toys and masturbation, and catapulted sex and self-pleasure into the wellness category.

"As lockdown provided us with the time and space to get to know our bodies, people were more sexually adventurous, as reflected in their purchase behaviour," she tells *Body+Soul*, "and moved beyond first toy purchase to anal play, [bondage] gear and more unique accessories that reflect shifting sexual identities and orientations."

The future of sex keeps progressing despite dissenting currents, and there are many new trends to be explored.

"We're going to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and celebrate the fact that pleasure looks different in different populations, and through individuals' eyes"

For Cole, some of the most interesting ideas that were highlighted in the Lovehoney Group's sex trends report include environmentally friendly sex-play, which takes a greener attitude towards bedroom equipment; the uptake of wearable toys that can be sleek, form-fitting and even worn to the supermarket; and digital sex, through super-connected toys that are accessible for a range of body types.

"With less shame and more openness, we can expect the gap for inclusive sextech to shorten," she says. "We're going to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and celebrate the fact that pleasure looks different in different populations, and through individuals' eyes."

While some of the trends we're seeing in regards to

space, sex and AI may still be some way off, Cole says it's important that we start the conversation about it now.

"By talking about sex in a 'normal' and free way, we start to break down the barriers and shift the cultural stigma," she explains. "Our environment and social norms are constantly evolving. It's critical that sexuality continues to be part of the conversation as a core part of our health and wellness, and the experience of being human."

Yet, the journey to sexual liberation hasn't all been smooth-sailing. Counter-movements around the world are stemming its progress, such as investigations into trans children in Texas, and a continuing lack of support for sex workers in Australia.

While we may have become more open about sex, says Cole, general attitudes towards sexuality are still commonly skewed around sex assigned at birth and heterosexuality. "We've come far in the past decade," she adds, "but we've still got a long way to go."



New relationship models: ethical non-monogamy

Outdated ideas of monogamy are slowly making way for more open-minded ideas

Christine Rafe, sex and relationship therapist at Good Vibes Clinic

Ethical non-monogamy, or ENM, is an umbrella term for relationship formations that aren't exclusively monogamous between two people. The "ethical" component means it's something that's discussed and agreed upon by all people involved, with clear boundaries. The main forms include:

+ OPEN RELATIONSHIPS
A couple who are open to new romantic or sexual partners.

+ SWINGING
Couples who have sex with another couple and/or swap partners.

+ MONOGAMISH RELATIONSHIPS
A couple who are mostly monogamous but occasionally have sex with other people.

+ POLYFIDELITY
A closed romantic/sexual group of people who agree not to have relationships outside the established group.

+ POLYAMORY
People who have multiple romantic and/or sexual relationships at a time.

Many of us learnt that the epitome of a successful relationship was a monogamous relationship. Statistics

on infidelity and divorce however, don't align with this narrative, and the belief that one person can fulfil our emotional, romantic, friendship, sexual, financial and spiritual needs is quickly becoming outdated.

The Lovehoney Group's 2022 sex trends report found a rise in people exploring ENM relationships, and cited a recent YouGov poll in the US of more than 1300 adults in which 32 per cent stated their ideal relationship would be non-monogamous to some degree.

Unfortunately, because we're talking about unlearning a lifetime's worth of social conditioning that monogamy is the "right" way to be in a relationship, it can take generations to shift perspective.

HOW TO TRY IT

Seek ENM resources to help you learn more about its nuances. Books such as *Polysecure* by Jessica Fern and *The Ethical Slut* by Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy, and podcasts such as *Polyamory Weekly* are a great place to start.

Spend some time thinking about and mapping out what an ideal relationship – in whatever formation – could look like to you at this point and set very clear boundaries with any partner(s). ▶

INCLUSIVE SEXUALITY FOR EVERYONE

Awareness of sexuality in the field of disability is rapidly increasing as more people speak out about their needs and reclaim their sensual side

Michaela Southby, senior sexuality counsellor and educator at Sexuality Education Counselling and Consultancy Agency (SECCA)

Disability comes in many forms and people with disability are wrongly assumed to be non-sexual. Sexuality is part of the human condition, it begins at birth, lasts a lifetime and is a core part of everyone.

With the NDIS and disability royal commission in the news, and wheelchair tennis star and disability advocate Dylan Alcott (who appeared on the cover of *Stellar* with his sexologist girlfriend Chantelle Otten in 2020, to challenge stereotypes about relationships) named Australian of the Year, awareness is on the rise.

The more we break down taboos around disability, the more we'll understand that we all have the same needs. As we move forward, we'll continue to peel

off the layers of mystery, raise awareness of human rights and shift the shame in talking about sexuality. We should see more open talk, more opportunities for education, improved training for teachers expected to deliver relationships and sex education at school, and certainly a focus on consent and pleasure.

HOW TO TRY IT

Adults with disability seeking help with sexual intimacy may have missed this education and need some training regarding their bodies and what feels good. They may also need private spaces and safety awareness before being supported to use assistive technology by therapists or educators. Sexual aids and erotic material may be as useful and enjoyable for someone with a disability as for someone without.

Bigger odysseys: AI and space sex-ploration

Artificial intelligence and space exploration are two big themes on the horizon for the future of humanity

Bryony Cole, sex tech expert for the Lovehoney Group and host of The Future Of Sex podcast With the commercialisation of space allowing astro travel for civilians, people are getting excited about the prospect of going to space with the same fervour seen during the space race in the 1960s and 1970s.

But there are lots of unanswered questions about sex in space, and research still needs to be made a priority if we want to get even more excited about going into orbit.



For instance, how does arousal and blood flow to the sex organs work in zero gravity?

As far as AI is concerned, this has already taken flight in a number of apps and connected devices that allow us to build intimacy with ourselves, track our data and become better lovers. It's no longer simply the domain of sci-fi movies.

HOW TO TRY IT

While we won't be trying sex in space for a while yet, there are already ways to

try sexual AI, depending on your location and budget. The most futuristic is Harmony AI, a gynoid or "fembot" with 10 personality types that offers the kind of AI most of us likely think of when we talk about sex and technology.

Meanwhile, chatbots like Slutbot in the US can help you learn how to sext better, apps like Mend use AI to help you track and get over heartbreak, and smart vibrators use AI to help users better understand their orgasms.

ME TIME: "MENSTRUBATION" FOR PAIN RELIEF

Masturbation during menstruation is the most natural and pleasurable painkiller there is

Johanna Rief, head of sexual empowerment at the Lovehoney Group

In 2020, the *Menstrubation Study* conducted by sex-toy brand Womanizer and menstrual-cup company Lunette was the first clinical study worldwide to examine if masturbation could help ease period pain. Its findings showed that regular masturbation helped decrease both the intensity and frequency of pain over time.

During and after orgasm, the release of hormones such as endorphins, oxytocin and dopamine impacts the body in positive ways. It's not only about enhancing self-pleasure anymore, it's about understanding that self-pleasure equals self-care; it's about leveraging pleasure for your own mental and physical health.

In general, masturbation as well as menstruation are still largely taboo topics, however the *Menstrubation Study* was picked up by global media, showing that the interest in this topic is very high.

HOW TO TRY IT

Masturbate throughout the month and keep note of how this impacts the level of period pain you experience. Use a standardised 10-point scale for tracking your pain, with one scale measuring the intensity of the pain and one measuring the frequency of the pain (1 = low, not often; 10 = high, very often).

Do this over at least three months or three menstruation cycles, and you may already start to feel a positive impact. The natural release of endorphins, oxytocin and dopamine after masturbation is likely to increase your general level of wellbeing all the time, not just during your period.

FORWARD-THINKING SEX TOYS



We-Vibe Bond App Controlled Rechargeable Wearable Vibrating Cock Ring, \$149.95, lovehoney.com.au

This adjustable cock ring is designed to be sleek and undetectable under your clothing for out-of-the-bedroom play and creates thrilling vibes in private. Operated via the app, it can be controlled remotely by a partner.



The Bumpin' Joystick, \$249, getbumpn.com
Designed for and by disabled people, the flexible Joystick transfers the need for hands and fine motor skills to larger muscle groups, making it much more accessible. Suited to all gender expressions, it holds a variety of sex toys – vibrators, dildos, wands, sleeves – and has a soft pillow on top for comfort.



We-Vibe Moxie App & Remote Controlled Wearable Clitoral Knicker Vibrator, \$149.95, lovehoney.com.au
Whisper-quiet and discreet, this silicone vibrator has 10 modes and attaches to your knickers with a magnetic clip. As well as being waterproof and USB rechargeable, it can be controlled from anywhere via the connected app.



Womanizer Premium Eco Smart Silence Clitoral Stimulator, \$299.95, lovehoney.com.au
Thanks to its Smart Silence tech, this clitoral stimulator only comes to life when it makes contact with your skin. Made from biodegradable material, it features 12 intensity levels and an exchangeable battery you can replace after 300 charges.



Kiirroo Keon Combo Set Includes Stroker, \$459.99, joujou.com.au
This compact male sex toy and automated stroker combines elegant design with smart technology. Featuring speed and stroke control, it can be connected and synced to online erotic content on popular adult sites, and even paired with mobile VR goggles for an immersive experience. ●