

COSMOPOLITAN

EXPERTS

sex advice

from Amy Levine, Cosmo's Carnal Counselor

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"Can arousal creams increase sexual satisfaction?"

Q Do creams that are supposed to enhance women's arousal really work?

A Some women swear by these over-the-counter lust lotions, but they don't work on everyone. Most of these creams, which are rubbed on the clitoris to boost sensation, contain two main ingredients: L-Arginine (an amino acid), which dilates the blood vessels, increasing blood flow and sensitivity; and menthol, peppermint or wintergreen, which causes a tingly feeling that can be very stimulating. However, truly satisfying sex is dependent on the right physical and mental factors. Without them these potions will do nothing more than give you a subtle below-the-belt throb.

It's important to know that these products are not regulated by the FDA, so marketers can make any claims they want. Plus, experts still don't know if there are any negative effects from long-term use. If you decide to try one out, do a patch test (rub a bit on your arm or leg) before applying it to your clitoris to make sure you don't have an allergic reaction. (If you experience any discomfort -- like a rash, itch or burning feeling -- at any point during the trial or after you've applied it on your private parts, wash it off immediately.) Also, if it doesn't say that it's safe to use with condoms, check the list of ingredients to make sure it doesn't contain oil, which can render a rubber useless. Bottom line: Play it safe and ask your gyno about the product you want to use first.

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