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EXPERTS

sex advice

from Amy Levine, Cosmo's Carnal Counselor

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"How do I know if I'm having an orgasm?"

Q I've recently become sexually active, and I'm not sure if I am reaching orgasm. Can you tell me what it feels like?

A Simply put, an orgasm is an intensely pleasurable physical response that results from the release of tension built up during sexual stimulation. When you're being aroused, your heart beats faster, your breathing quickens, your nipples become erect, and your genitals become engorged with blood. As arousal climbs, these sensations increase until you climax, i.e., orgasm, and your body returns to its unaroused state.

While the physical process is the same for everyone, the actual orgasmic experience varies from woman to woman. In fact, every orgasm is unique, even your own. You might feel a mild tingle one time and an explosive full-body rush the next. However, there are some general tip-offs, such as contractions in your vagina, pelvic lifting or thrusting, curling of the toes or fingers, heavy, rapid breathing and moaning, followed by a sense of euphoria.

Chances are, if you're not sure whether you've reached the big O, you probably haven't because the feeling is so distinct, it's unlikely you'd confuse it with anything else. If you suspect, then, that you aren't climaxing, you can learn to by becoming familiar with your body and how it reacts to sexual stimulation. Have you tried masturbating? If not, see [Your Hands-on Guide to Solo Sex](#) in *Cosmo's* Sex Articles archives. Once you've mastered your own domain, you'll be better able to let your guy know what turns you on. The trick is to experiment -- both solo and with him -- using different types of touch until you find the method that makes you tingle -- then go with it. It will also help if you try to just focus on the erotic sensations rather than worrying about the end result, which will just distract you.

The good news: While it might take some trial and error before you discover what gets you off, you and your guy can have a hell of a good time trying to figure it out.