

Will sex-ercise burn calories? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

You know how you often see that, for example, a 30-minute jog burns such and such number of calories. Well, I was wondering if there are any figures for sex. Thanks.

— Curious

Answer

Dear Curious,

Burn, baby, burn — talk about a great workout! While you may experience some of the same physical effects during sex as you would during a vigorous workout (sweating, rapid heartbeat), you may not want to rely on sex as a main source of physical activity. Sex may not burn as many calories, but it still has a number of other benefits!

Many people believe sex burns more calories than it actually does. According to various research, it's estimated that a person can burn about 20 calories during six minutes of sexual activity, and approximately 77 to 105 calories during a 25-minute timeframe. As with any physical activity, calorie expenditure during sex will vary depending on a person's weight, sex assigned at birth, overall fitness level, and the type of sexual activities involved, as well as the duration, intensity, if orgasm occurs, and position during sex. Research on sexual activity and the heart suggests that the maximum energy expenditure during sex occurs during orgasm but returns to its usual rate within two to three minutes after. So, while you may burn more calories during orgasm, this higher rate of metabolism isn't sustained after orgasm has ended.

When compared with aerobic activities, sex doesn't burn nearly as many calories. For example, dancing and running may burn two to five times as many calories as sexual activity during similar timeframes. While sex may burn 77 to 105 calories in 25 minutes, doing an endurance exercise on a treadmill for 30 minutes burns approximately 250 to 555 calories, and dancing for 30 minutes is thought to burn about 90 to 266 calories. It can be helpful to remember that calculations to determine how many calories are burned are only estimates, and different studies have resulted in different estimates.

It may be helpful to check out the [Go Ask Alice! Nutrition & Physical Activity](#) [2] archives for more information on energy expenditure and how it's calculated. Additionally, if you're interested in finding ways to burn calories or achieve a higher level of fitness, you may consider starting or maintaining a regular physical activity program. You could check out the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) [3] for recommendations regarding physical activity and calorie-burning.

That being said, while there are estimates of calorie burn for various activities, there are numerous benefits to aerobic activity that go far beyond calorie burn. Be it stress relief, stronger muscles, or increased energy (among many other benefits), cardio activity can help to keep the body going. Besides calorie burn, other benefits of sex include a reduction in stress and anxiety and increased calmness. So, while sex-ercise may not be the most effective option for calorie burn (if that's your goal), you can still enjoy sex for the other benefits it provides!

Alice!

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