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[Home](#) > Retrograde ejaculation: Can it be 'reversed'?

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## Retrograde ejaculation: Can it be 'reversed'? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

One of my textbooks makes mention of retrograde ejaculation. It says that semen is released into the urinary bladder but it doesn't talk about the functional aspects. Can the problem be corrected? Is it a painful problem?

**Answer**

Dear Reader,

During ejaculation, the internal sphincter, a muscle located between the prostate and the bladder, closes tightly, preventing ejaculation and urination from happening at the same time. If this muscle relaxes, it can force some of the ejaculate backwards into the bladder, rather than out of the urethral tip. This is called retrograde ejaculation. The next time a person with a penis with this condition urinates, the urine is noticeably cloudy because it has been mixed with ejaculate. Health care providers or urologists can confirm the diagnosis of retrograde ejaculation by testing the urine for the presence of sperm.

Retrograde ejaculation has many causes. Certain medications that treat hypertension and prostate conditions; genital surgery; or, diseases, such as diabetes, which can cause nerve impairment in and around the bladder, cause ejaculate to flow backward. Often, retrograde ejaculation is a first sexual side effect for males with diabetes, who are the most commonly affected group. In any case, it's wise to get an accurate diagnosis by a medical professional. Depending upon the cause of retrograde ejaculation, treatments and outcomes vary. Medications are usually used first, often pseudoephedrine initially, or imipramine.

Folks with retrograde ejaculation still produce sperm. Sperm can be medically retrieved from the first urine sample after ejaculation. This sperm can be used for artificial insemination.

People feel no pain, and usually no sensation at all, from having retrograde ejaculation. Strange and unfamiliar, however, may come to mind when they notice their orgasm is not accompanied by a "burst" of semen. Since orgasm and ejaculation are two separate physiological processes, a person with retrograde ejaculation can still feel intense pleasure and contractions during orgasm.

Alice!

Category:

[Sexual & Reproductive Health](#) [2]

[Men's Sexual Health](#) [3]

## Related questions

[Problematic erection and ejaculation?](#) [4]

[Premature ejaculation](#) [5]

[Prolonging arousal/Lasting longer](#) [6]

[No orgasms with intercourse \(male\)](#) [7]

[My lover never ejaculates](#) [8]

[Can't ejaculate](#) [9]

## Resources

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [10]

[Medical Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [11]

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## Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
  - Content Use
  - Media Inquiries
  - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
  - Licensing Q&As
  - Get Alice! on Your Website
  - Full Site Syndication
  - Link to Go Ask Alice!

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### Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/retrograde-ejaculation-can-it-be-reversed>
- [2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/sexual-reproductive-health>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/mens-sexual-health>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/problematic-erection-and-ejaculation>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/premature-ejaculation-0>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/prolonging-arousallasting-longer>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/no-orgasms-intercourse-male>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/my-lover-never-ejaculates>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/cant-ejaculate-5>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>