

## Blue balls, blue ovaries? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

If a woman doesn't come or have an orgasm, can her ovaries hurt just like a man's testicles can hurt if he doesn't come?

### **Answer**

Dear Reader,

To paraphrase your question: if blue balls exist, what about blue ovaries? “Blue balls” is a wonderfully vivid slang term which refers to the testicular aching that can occur when someone is sexually aroused, but doesn't ejaculate. Although ovaries could be considered the counterpart to testicles, that pent-up fluid feeling is more likely to be felt in the labia, clitoris, and the outer third of the vagina — so, maybe it's more accurate to call it “blue vulva.” Regardless of the term, “blue” genitals can occur in anyone when they become sexually and genitally aroused and can be relieved in a number of ways. Read on for how to take care of this pesky problem.

When people become sexually excited, arteries pump blood to the genital area while nearby veins constrict to keep the blood there (also referred to as vasocongestion). In people with penises (PWP), this increased blood flow and constriction of blood vessels causes the penis to become erect and the testicles to enlarge by about 20 percent. In people with vaginas (PWV), the labia, vagina, and clitoris swell and lubricate, and if they have breasts and nipples, they too enlarge and heighten in sensitivity.

Although the stages of sexual response vary among individuals, following these signs of sexual excitement is sometimes the plateau phase of sexual arousal — the prolonged, intense sexual arousal phase, then followed by orgasm. While the sexual response cycle doesn't have to peak at orgasm, the body usually returns to a relaxed, non-excited state more quickly after it occurs. Arteries and veins return to their normal size and functioning, and blood quickly drains from the genitals, relieving pressure and returning to their usual size. However, if there's no orgasm, the genitals still go through the same process, it might just take longer for the physical signs of arousal to subside.

People with any genitalia may experience a feeling of aching or heaviness in the genital and

pelvic areas, due to sustained vasocongestion. In PWV, this may be felt in the vagina, vulva, and clitoris that are sensitive, possibly darkened in color, and lubricated. For PWP, the source of pain and discomfort is pressure from the trapped blood in the penis and testicles (and the surrounding areas), not blocked up sperm or semen as some may believe. In fact, “blue balls” gets the name from the bluish tint that testicles take on as a result of trapped blood.

Aching from blue balls or blue vulva is usually short-lived and isn't harmful. From a physiological standpoint, this phenomenon can happen to anyone, although the common vernacular might lead you to believe that PWP experience it more often. Some might even use blue balls (or vulva) to convince, manipulate, or guilt-trip their partner(s) to engage in sexual activity that their partner may or may not want. With that being said, sex ending in orgasm isn't the only way to find relief — masturbating, letting the arousal fade with rest or nonsexual activity, engaging in simple physical activity, placing an ice or hot pack to the genitals (just not *too* hot or *too* cold), or taking a cold shower may be other options to explore. Sexual pleasure has many health benefits, and can be experienced with or without a partner; but keep in mind that not all sexual arousal or activity needs to end in orgasm in order to be exciting, fulfilling, and feel good. Check out the *Go Ask Alice!* archives for more on [Orgasms](#) [2], [Genital Wonderings](#) [3], and [Sexual Questions](#) [4].

Here's hoping you're no longer aching for more information on blue vulva!

Alice!

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