

fuller, more wide-ranging sensations.

Extra benefits

And particularly for older couples, these sex toys can often provide solutions to problems that may creep up on you with age. So if you are suffering from vaginal dryness, there are lubricants - many with added ingredients to give extra stimulation. If you are suffering post-menopausal lack of genital tone and strength, using ben wa balls is a delicious way to exercise. If he is having some erectile difficulty then - once he's checked with the doctor that there's nothing more serious going on - penis rings can help.



And if either of you finds your orgasms are not as strong as they once were, the vibrator your new man mentioned comes into its own. He can use it on the tip of his penis, the frenulum (the small string of tissue joining glans and shaft), and (gently!) on his testicles. You can use it on nipples and labia, finishing off on your clitoris; bring yourself to climax in front of him then teach him to replicate your skill!

How to find

You mention that your man is particularly keen on your buying together - an excellent idea as then both of you will be happy with your choice.

Your first step could be to browse on the internet - this gives you a huge range of possibilities and you can buy easily and quickly. That said, some websites emphasise penetration to the exclusion of all else - which can be off-putting for women, particularly if, post menopaually, penetration is not your activity of choice. Beware too of product hype (nothing available on the web will increase his penis size, your breast size or guarantee him an erection!),

Two excellent sites are LoveHoney (www.lovehoney.co.uk) and Sh! (www.sh-womenstore.com). They not only offer a wide range of credible and reliable products but also expert advice on how to use the toys and what to do if you are confused or hit a problem.

Going to a sex store does have advantages however. Face to face buying allows you not only to try the products but also get advice from the normally very clued-up and helpful shop assistants. Don't panic - they are used to giggles and are trained to help you choose the product that's absolutely right for you. Of the sites mentioned above. Sh! has a women-only store for the London-based, located at 57 Hoxton Square - though men can go in if accompanied by a woman.

How to choose

For any sex toy there are lots of decisions to make - one reason why even if you're going to buy on the web, an initial visit to a sex store, maybe a high street one, will allow you to 'get your eye in'.

Appearance is vital - do you want pretty pink or smooth matte black? Feel is even more vital - test out by shutting your eyes and running your fingers over the toy; try out vibrators on your nose or hand.



Size too is a consideration; he in particular can end up buying toys for insertion that are far too big; carve a cucumber to size and then use a tape measure to get an accurate width and length to inform your buying decision.)

Also consider the practicalities. Do you need waterproof? Do you want batteries or mains? Do you need to control the noise level so that the kids don't hear; 'jelly toys' are quieter, as are remote controlled; the smaller the batteries, the quieter the toy.

How to use

At last, time to use your sex toy. I'm assuming that you and your man have both been tested for STIs; yes, we of the older cohort do often assume that it is only the youngsters who are at risk but in fact, STI rise is currently steepest among the 45+ group! If you haven't been tested, then don't share toys, or if you do, pop a condom over before use. Even if you have been tested, always use a condom for bacteria-ridden anal play.

What to do then?

Actually, step-by-step instructions are unhelpful here. Follow your instincts.

In other words, experiment by stroking, kneading, patting, pressing, using different movements and taking up different positions. Play - for hours, being gentle, hard, quick, slow, reassuringly regular and arousingly unexpected. If one of you doesn't like what's happening, then stop. But if you like what you feel - or what your partner feels, then carry on. When you run out of ideas, most websites and shops will give you lots of suggestions about how to use all the toys in their range.

Above all - to quote a song that you'll surely remember - "if it feels good, do it"!

- Susan