



The most intimate Good Housekeeping test...ever!



*Does this look
like a sex toy
to you?*

We've come a long way, ladies. Vibrators are no longer giggly gifts for hen nights, they are serious aids to sexual pleasure. But how to choose? Don't worry - we've done the (ahem!) hard work for you



Think sex toys and Good Housekeeping are unlikely bedfellows? Well, it's not the first time we've tested vibrators to find out if they're hitting the spot for women. But a lot has changed in the five years since our last survey; the 'nice women don't' tag has gone, there are more vibrators than ever on the market and they've changed beyond all recognition. Last time we tested them they looked like gadgets designed by men, for men!

Not any more. A pebble, a leaf or a lipstick, today's vibrators are far less likely to resemble part of the male anatomy – and for good reason. Psychologist Susan Quilliam, who re-wrote the latest version of *The Joy Of Sex*, explains: 'Manufacturers used to think that women needed a vibrator designed like a man's penis. They now realise it needs to be more like a woman's hand. They've become less biologically realistic – and more socially acceptable.'

And women are driving the change. 'We are better educated, earn more and have more choice about whether we walk away from an unsatisfying relationship than our mothers did. We are far more willing to take control of our own pleasure,' says Susan. She believes that Baby Boomers, who were at the forefront of the sexual revolution, are far more aware and adventurous when it comes to sex toys. 'Women use them with their partners, but there is also a flurry of women in their late 40s, 50s and 60s who suddenly find themselves single and don't want to forego their sex life, who want a modern, more approachable kind of vibrator.'

So, in what we believe is the largest ever survey of its kind, we asked 100 GH readers, aged between 30 and 80, to test this new generation of sex toys to see if they deliver discreet, grown-up pleasure. The verdict: a chorus of approval – 90% of testers said they are now more likely to buy a vibrator, and 62% felt they wouldn't be embarrassed to own one of today's chic little numbers, with one satisfied tester of our winner, the Je Joue Mimi, commenting, 'I would be happy to buy this as a gift for curious friends as it is an object of beauty.' Another said of the Rocks-Off Bullet, 'It's like a best friend: discreet, great fun, and always there. And it's so small I keep it in a lipstick case!'

It's a far cry from vibrators' beginnings as medical contraptions that were used in Victorian times as a cure for female hysteria.



Nice girls do: the newest websites cater for women more likely to pick up a Lakeland catalogue than Cosmo

62% of women said the new-look vibrators were much more attractive and discreet

What our results show is that women today want sex toys that are not intimidating or girly. It's exactly this market that has inspired the launch of online boutiques like Whistle & Hum. The site promises never to 'talk about pink furry handcuffs, fifty shades of nylon lingerie or twelve inches of kinky pleasure.' There's even a button you can press to replace the page with innocuous pictures of cappuccinos and dogs, should someone appear over your shoulder. But even without that button, the vibrators look so unlike sex toys you could – almost – browse the site in public. The store's founder, Sally Young, says, 'Anecdotal evidence tells us that visitors to our site are likely to be in their late 30s, 40s or 50s, and the page on menopause issues is one of the most viewed.' This is a shop catering for women more likely to pick up a Lakeland catalogue than Cosmo.

And the latest vibrators don't just look great – they work, too. Nearly half our

testers said it was easier to reach orgasm with a vibrator than with their partner, and a quarter said they had more sex because of the survey. Many told us the trial had made a positive difference to their lives, with one person saying of the Lelo Tiani 3 vibrator for couples, 'It was a pleasure to test, particularly as our sex life has fallen by the wayside recently.' Of the winning vibrator, the Je Joue Mimi, one woman wrote: 'I always struggled to orgasm before, but now because of this creation I feel like I know my body better and am happier in myself.'

Women still need to say what they want

But if you're hoping a vibrator will be the answer to all the problems in your sex life, be careful, because it's not a cure-all, warns social psychologist Dr Petra Boynton. 'If you don't feel like having sex, it might be better to have a conversation about your relationship in general. Are you arguing a lot? Do you feel exhausted? What's the division of labour in your home? It's not sexy, but it is important. A vibrator isn't going to take the bins out or help with the school run – although I wish it did – and it won't just give you your libido back.' The variety of answers we received for each vibrator proves that one size does not fit all: our experiences are as individual as our bodies. Petra says, 'Sex toys have their place, but they're not for everybody. Some women find them helpful and enjoyable and use them regularly, some once and never again – and others don't want to try.' But for some, the results truly are orgasmic...

FEATURE: MOYA SARNER. PHOTOGRAPHY (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY

TRIED & TESTED

How was it for them?

We asked sex therapist Sarah Berry to help us choose five vibrators that deliver on looks as well as pleasure. Each tester received two vibrators. Our survey, conducted by Tpoll Market Intelligence and compiled by GH experts, was made up of a 100-strong panel of women aged 30 to 80 (50 single women and 50 couples), with varying experience of sex toys, who filled in a detailed questionnaire.



77
100

THE WINNER JE JOUE MIMI £64.99

A silicone pebble that fits in your palm for external use, with a range of settings from subtle pulsing to deep vibrations.

ON THE UPSIDE... 'Cute, feminine, feels nice in the palm and is not a bit scary.'

ON THE DOWNSIDE... 'The buttons are in an awkward place to change speed during use.'

Stockist: jejoue.com



74
100

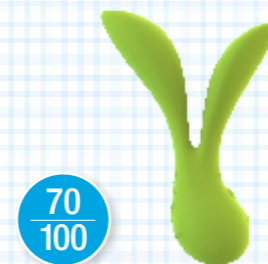
FOR COUPLES LELO TIANI 3 £118.95

A silicone vibrator designed to be worn during sex – remote controlled by you or your partner.

ON THE UPSIDE... 'I love how it looks!'

ON THE DOWNSIDE... 'My husband was rather put off by the mechanics of it.'

Stockist: simplypleasure.com



70
100

GOOD ALL-ROUNDER LEAF VITALITY £105

An eco-friendly toy with two individually controlled leaves, for internal and external stimulation.

ON THE UPSIDE... 'Pretty, and not obviously a vibrator – handy if you have young children.'

ON THE DOWNSIDE... 'The shape doesn't really work for me.'

Stockist: whistleandhum.co.uk



68
100

SMALL AND DISCREET ROCKS-OFF BULLET £11.99

A powerful, seven-speed vibrator that is cheap, small enough to fit in a lipstick case and comes in a range of colours and patterns.

ON THE UPSIDE... 'It gives me such a quick orgasm; I've already ordered more batteries!'

ON THE DOWNSIDE... 'I find it slightly too small and fiddly.'

Stockist: rocks-off.com



57
100

FOR BEGINNERS DISCRETION MINI VIBE £9.99

A handbag-size, quiet vibrator with just one setting – a good place to start.

ON THE UPSIDE... 'I can take it anywhere and because it's so quiet, new local avenues have opened up!'

ON THE DOWNSIDE... 'I was disappointed – it looks dull and basic.'

Stockist: simplypleasure.com

CHOOSE THE RIGHT VIBRATOR

Don't just Google the word 'vibrator' – you'll get 32,200,000 results, many of them off-putting and entirely unsuitable. Women's needs differ, and a vibrator is a very personal choice. Some women like a steady pulse or, if you have problems tipping into orgasm, a model with different vibration settings may be the answer. Follow this advice from expert Susan Quilliam and sex therapist Sarah Berry on how to decide which vibrator is right for you.

♥ Do your research!

Compare prices and functions; think about what you want from your vibrator, and use it with a water-based lube. Think about safety, too. You clearly need to be careful about what you are using in such an intimate place! Like us, only buy from reputable retailers and websites. Watch out for cheap fakes – you probably won't want to complain, and the fraudsters will be relying on that!

♥ Pick a shape

First, decide whether you want to use your vibrator for penetration, for your clitoris, or both at the same time – that will determine the shape of the toy you want to buy. You might also want it to bend at the top to reach the G-spot. Either way, buy a water-based lube to use with it, otherwise it can be painful if you experience vaginal dryness.

♥ Good (quiet) vibrations

As women get older, many find they need a stronger vibration to feel an effect, so it's worth buying a vibrator with varying strengths. But some can be noisy; if you don't want others knowing what you're up to, check out online reviews.

♥ Pleasure any time, anywhere

If you travel a lot and want to take your vibrator through customs, you either need to be brazenly confident or carry a lipstick-like version that you can keep in your make-up bag. Otherwise, you might find yourself facing a very surprised customs officer!

♥ What will he think?

One tester said: 'I enjoyed telling my husband we were going to trial a vibrator – and he was happy, too!' But not all partners will feel the same. So, talk before you buy, says Dr Boynton. 'If the idea of a formal discussion about buying a vibrator sends you into a cold sweat, try having a series of chats instead,' she suggests. 'You might do it face to face, write a letter or an email, or even show him this article and suggest giving it a go. It's okay to say you're a bit nervous or embarrassed, and it might help if you keep the tone light-hearted.' □