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Sex before competing: Does it boost athletes' performance?

By **Aline Juarez Nieto**, CNNMexico
updated 4:48 PM EDT, Fri August 10, 2012

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There's no truth to the myth that sex before a match hurts athletes' performance, officials say.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Sex can actually benefit an athlete before competing, sports official says

Sex can help distract athletes and reduce their stress levels

But alcohol, cigarettes and lack of sleep can harm athletic performance

Editor's note: Read this article in Spanish on [CNNMexico.com](#)

(CNNMexico.com) -- The International Olympic Committee distributed 150,000 condoms to athletes competing in London 2012. But what about the myth that claims that sex before a competition reduces the players' performance?

Some athletes have admitted that the Olympics are not only a stage for world records and medals, but in the Olympic Village, sexual relationships are common among competitors and volunteers. This is a different story compared to previous decades.

"At the end of the '50s and beginning of the '60s, people thought that sex diminished the players' performance," said Antonio Miguel, head of medical services at the Club Universidad Nacional Pumas, one of the Mexican first division's top soccer clubs, and a former football player.

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"Coaches gave us nitrate salts (potassium nitrate, a substance used to prevent erections) because, according to them, this would inhibit the sexual desire," Miguel said.

Miguel explains that this myth was a product of the lack of knowledge on these topics. However, this has changed.

Sex, games and Olympic village life

Juan Carlos Medina, general coordinator of the sports department at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, a Mexico university, said sexual relations actually have benefits for athletes.

"It helps you feel relaxed and sexually, mentally and physically satisfied," he said. "This contributes to reduce the athlete's anxiety levels before an important match."

"The Netherlands national soccer team, at the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, is an example of this," Medina said.

"Some of those players were accompanied by their wives, and they won the second place. I don't say this is a determinant factor, but it brings support.

"Another example is [Elias Figueroa](#), a Chilean soccer player, who once said that his coach advised them to have sex the afternoon before an important game, and he even repeated the encounter after the match, because it was relaxing."

According to Medina, sex helps to distract the mind from the competition and that helps sweep away mental fatigue, which is more dangerous than physical fatigue.

"Even Pele confessed that he never suspended sexual encounters with his wife before a game, I mean, that thing about sex helping to relax is a verified truth," he said.

There is no scientific evidence that sex could alter an athlete's performance. Maria Cristina Rodríguez Gutierrez, director of sports medicine at the [National Autonomous University of Mexico](#), or UNAM, said that the belief that sex before the game affects a competitor stems from coaches' training.

Rodríguez added that the oxygen consumption and the calories burned during a sexual encounter are minimal: "Sex only burns between 200 and 300 kilocalories, which doesn't compare to running a marathon or just a regular workout session. You can restore these calories by eating a chocolate bar or drinking a can of soda."

Counter-productive scenarios

However, the consumption of alcohol or cigarettes or lack of sleep, which sometimes accompanies sexual activity, does affect athletes' performance.

Rodríguez indicated that the moderation is the key. "Every athlete or player, professional or amateur, can have sex as long as he or she goes to bed early, hydrates, avoids mood altering drinks and cigarettes, because all this has a negative impact on their body."

Miguel explained that during the years, science has verified that this

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London's Olympic Games continue to provide drama and passion -- see the best images from day 15 of the competition here.

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I always thought London 2012 would be a success, but never imagined it would be quite the triumph it has turned out to be.

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updated 6:21 AM EDT, Fri August 10, 2012



Adrien Niyonshuti is unlikely to win an Olympic medal, and he will do well to even finish his event, but his story is surely one of the most inspirational.

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updated 12:05 PM EDT, Fri August 10, 2012



Olympic fever has cheered up London and made it a more welcoming place, but will optimism be one of the legacies of the Games?

London 2012: The women's Olympics?

updated 2:25 PM EDT, Fri August 10, 2012



London 2012 is the first Olympics to feature women in every national team, with Jacques Rogge hailing a "major boost for gender equality."

Gymnast vaults from rags to riches

updated 8:40 PM EDT, Thu August 9, 2012



An impoverished South Korean gymnast has not only struck Olympic gold, but also reaped a \$444,000 donation in a veritable rags to riches tale.

Golden girl Ennis: I'd do it for nothing

updated 8:46 PM EDT, Wed August 8, 2012



Britain's hero Jessica Ennis is set to cash in after winning heptathlon gold, but the poster girl of the 2012 Olympics says fame is not her motivation.

Gender row runner makes Games bow

updated 9:07 AM EDT, Wed August 8, 2012

activity does not influence an athlete's performance, "much less if it's with a steady partner. However, one-night stands could alter a player's performance because these emotional situations wear you out more than physical ones."

Rodriguez said the only case in which the effects of sex might be counterproductive is in combat sports.

"For combat athletes like fighters or boxers, having sex before an important fight can reduce the aggressiveness and make them passive," although effects vary from person to person.

"Sexual activities must never be prohibited to athletes, since there is no scientific evidence to support it. The same applies to men and women," said Rodriguez.

CNNMexico.com's Marysabel Huston-Crespo contributed to this report.

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TallinOK

Not for pole vaulters ...

0 minutes ago

Like Reply

Eric1958

I volunteer to help Hope Solo prepare for her next match!

0 minutes ago

Like Reply

Pushingback

Ok, ok, I'll sleep with Phelps and let you know.

11 minutes ago

Like Reply



South Africa's Caster Semenya makes her Olympic debut, three years after a gender controversy overshadowed the world championships.

China rallies around fallen hurdler Liu

updated 3:46 AM EDT, Wed August 8, 2012



China is rallying around fallen hurdler Liu Xiang after he failed to make it past the first-round heat for a second consecutive Olympics.

The first Olympic speed queen

updated 3:30 PM EDT, Fri August 3, 2012



The first woman to win Olympic gold almost died in a plane crash, but remarkably returned to run again for the U.S. in 1936.

Creating the world's best runners

updated 9:01 AM EDT, Wed March 21, 2012



CNN's David McKenzie looks at why Iten, Kenya, has been able to produce the world's best long distance runners.

Moscow 1980: Death of a dream

updated 11:04 AM EDT, Tue August 7, 2012



Don Paige could not bear to watch the race he knew he could win. The 1980 Moscow Olympics were the death of a dream for many athletes.

Can Bolt make Olympic history?

updated 11:38 AM EDT, Sun August 5, 2012



It is the question that has followed Usain Bolt for the past four years -- how fast can Jamaica's sprint superstar really run?

The Underdogs: Olympics' true heroes

updated 10:21 AM EDT, Sat August 4, 2012



While Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt grab the headlines, little-known athletes from around the world keep alive the original spirit of the Olympics.

Hunger Games: Eat like an Olympian



Athletes spend years eating the right foods ... and then must resist the free fast food in the Olympic village. How do they do it?

Play the CNN jigsaw game

updated 7:00 AM EDT, Thu August 2, 2012



In keeping with the Olympic spirit of overcoming challenge with determination why not take on the test of the CNN jigsaw?



Jag0419

Who pays for this? Would love to know.

38 minutes ago

Like Reply



kique

I also get sleepy after having sex. But them guys with tights look really nice and tempting. I guess I'll start saving to to Rio in 4 years. Maybe I can help them win a gold.

44 minutes ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Swearengen

Everything is better after sex.

56 minutes ago 1 Like

Like Reply



obamasuckss

What liberal thought this question up...it's stupid.

59 minutes ago

Like Reply



rgh21

Says the conservative who doesn't enjoy sex or condone condom use.

43 minutes ago in reply to obamasuckss 5 Likes

Like



norm1940

It is no wonder armies used to (and probably still do) have throngs of prostitutes accompany them during their campaigns. Apparently sex before or after action is beneficial.

1 hour ago

Like Reply



JALPVR

I would find it distracting with all those half-nude athletes running around with hard-ons and tight clothes.

2 hours ago 3 Likes

Like Reply



7685540

I am willing to take one for the team, if there are any attractive female athletes between 18 and 25 that needs a boost, I am here for you. I can handle more then one at a time.

3 hours ago 8 Likes

Like Reply



MonstrousPig

I am a guy and i am ready for you. let me know your address and your phone number, i will be there in a heart beat.

2 hours ago in reply to 7685540 5 Likes

Like



Jack Briss

men running is track events will run faster if they know they'll have sex after the race. But not before it lol

3 hours ago 10 Likes

Like Reply

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JALPVR

I'm with you on that one....

2 hours ago in reply to Jack Briss

Like



roughball19

anyone else find it funny Usain Bolt the worlds fastest man celebrated with members of the swiss female handball team???

Come on.....

He just did!!!!

3 hours ago 4 Likes

Like Reply



roughball19

150,000 condoms - there are only 10,000 athletes.

Wow, maybe the rumor about hope solo pulling a train on the italian soccer team (all of them) is true after all.

3 hours ago 2 Likes

Like Reply



JALPVR

Sex.....the new olympic sport...why not...almost anything can be considered a sport these days.

2 hours ago in reply to roughball19 2 Likes

Like



drldeboer

I find it boosts performance.

4 hours ago 1 Like

Like Reply



general_tarfun

so the economy is still terrible.

4 hours ago 1 Like

Like Reply



masterslaves

If science needs my 2 cents worth testimony, i wilt after sex and in need of some good sleep to recuperate but that was in the old good days.

4 hours ago 1 Like

Like Reply



The99thSeal

Not if you're a boxer like myself.

Sex before a bout will cause you the entire bout.

Sex lowers testosterone and thus lowers aggression.

4 hours ago

Like Reply



rgh21

It says that in the article from one "expert."

36 minutes ago in reply to The99thSeal

Like



jvance

I don't know about this, but I'm guessing the better athletes GET more sex (this from the guy always picked last on the playground). Maybe it's a chicken-egg thing.

4 hours ago 4 Likes

Like Reply



omdmp

Willing to help research - ladies gymnastics, please contact me prior to your next event.

Thanks.

4 hours ago 4 Likes

Like Reply



mazinman

Depends on who you are having the relations with. Some cant get enough and will wear you out.

4 hours ago

Like Reply

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