



Love

## The Summer of Sex: How Hooking Up Will Change After COVID

by Madeleine Aggeler

As more and more U.S. adults get vaccinated, a lot of us are eager to get back to in-person dating—in part so we can enjoy all the possible, uh, *intimacy* that entails. But after a year of lockdowns, quarantining, and social distancing, is this really going to be the “horniest summer ever,” as some have *posited*? What is the sexual landscape going to look like post-COVID? Are people going to be making up for lost time and jumping into bed as soon as possible, or will the pandemic have made people want to take things more slowly?

Here, Bumble talks to experts about what we should keep in mind as we navigate sex and dating post-COVID.

### Respect everyone’s approach to post-pandemic intimacy

Everyone has their own preferences when it comes to dating and sex. And for the most part, experts say, COVID doesn’t seem to have changed people’s attitudes to these aspects of life—rather, it seems to have

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people who were hooking up before the pandemic are going to be the people who are entering into the ‘roaring 20s’ phase of their dating.” Similarly, people who were more reserved and cautious in their approach to dating pre-COVID are likely to be even more careful going forward.

Gandhi says that while she has some clients chomping at the bit to get back to in-person dating, some have really embraced the **slow courtship process** that became necessary during the pandemic, enjoying calls and **video chats** before meeting up in person.

The way to deal with these varied preferences is the same as it was before COVID: pay attention, listen, and respect what both you and your date are looking for in terms of intimacy and sex.

### **Apply your candid COVID conversations to sexual health**

One pandemic dating trend that experts **hope will stick around** is the tendency to have more upfront conversations about health, safety, and boundaries—not just in regards to COVID, but in terms of sexual health and preferences as well. “People are having more conversations about sexually transmitted infections,” says Celeste Hirschman, a sex therapist and the **co-founder**, along with Danielle Harel, PhD, of the **Somatica Institute**, a sex and relationship coaching program. “I’m definitely seeing my clients talk more about it and get tested more frequently, so I hope that continues.”

(The inverse of this, Harel says, is that sometimes people get so fixated on their COVID safety that they forget to communicate about sexual health, so make sure to have conversations about both.)

If you’re not sure how to go about starting a conversation about pandemic or sexual health, Hirschman suggests a line like: “Your safety is really important to me, so what makes you feel safe?” (For more on starting a discussion on how safely a potential partner’s handled COVID protocols, see [here](#).)

### **If you feel a little out of practice, you’re not alone!**

If you’re nervous about getting intimate with someone for the first time in a long time, don’t worry—you’re not alone. Hirschman says a lot of daters are feeling rusty right now. That’s another argument to take it slow in the bedroom, she says. Explore, try to feel present in your body, be sensual, and don’t worry about trying to “achieve” anything in particular.

She and Harel also urge people to own up to whatever feelings of awkwardness they may have, maybe even saying something like: “It’s been a while!”

Being honest not only gives you a chance to laugh and connect with someone more deeply, but it could also help you actually enjoy the experience more. As Harel and Hirschman explain, when you’re trying to hide your anxiety and seem perfect, it’s much harder to experience pleasure —and for your body to function the way you would like it to.

“It’s the best time to say something like that, because people will understand,” says Harel. “Let yourself be a little awkward and laugh about it.”

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