



Are we *literally* **screwing** **the planet?**

Is climax change the latest frontier in sustainability? Marie-Claire Chappet gets to grips with the new wave of eco alternatives for a greener sex life. Grab your courgette*, you're in for a ride...

8.30am: Purchase a coffee in your reusable cup. #Smug
12.30pm: Buy your vegan lunch from a plastic-free shop and pop it in your canvas tote bag. #HumbleBrag
9pm: Wash your face with a muslin cloth and bar cleanser. #WhoNeedsWipesAnyway?
10.30pm: Reward yourself with a night of passion, electronic (hello, Rabbit) or otherwise. But wait – has your sex life just screwed the world?

Think about it: condoms, sex toys, lube, even the pill, all have a seismic environmental impact; contributing to an estimated 222.9 million tonnes of waste in the UK a year – it's enough to make you cross your legs forever. The polar bears aren't safe, and neither is your sex life.

So, what to do? Confine yourself to a vegan nunnery? Never shag again? Thankfully, the eco revolution has spread to the sex industry, with innovative products and solutions changing the way we get it on – from eco-conscious coupling to, er, vegan porn. But cleaning up your act could have consequences: encouraging less-than-safe practices and reducing our already dwindling sex lives (a British Medical Journal survey

*No courgettes have been harmed in the making of this feature

showed that a third of Brits won't have sex this month). So, is it possible to stop damaging the planet without damaging our sex lives, too?

THE CONDOM MOUNTAIN

Thought you'd relegated your exes to landfill? You genuinely may have done. An estimated 9 billion condoms are sold globally each year, meaning that (even if we discount bravado condoms lingering unused in teenage boys' wallets) there are a lot of them in landfill, along with the foil and plastic packaging. Most condoms are made from latex rubber, which can take up to four years to decompose, depending on the coating. Ernie Simpson, from recycling company TerraCycle, explains, "When condoms decompose deep in landfills, they leach harmful chemicals that spread into groundwater."

And if you were ever tempted to flush your used condoms down the loo – please don't. They enter sewers and eventually end up in the sea, where fish can ingest them. Grim.

Many big brands, including Durex and Skyn, do make polyurethane or polyisoprene condoms for people with latex allergies. But the planet has an allergy to them, as they don't biodegrade at all. In fact, the only condoms that decompose safely are lambskin, which aren't vegan and – crucially – don't prevent STIs (as the membrane has perforations).

If your sex life is penis free, or you prefer self-love, you could be off the hook – unless of course you use sex toys, most of which aren't eco-friendly, either. The plastics used don't biodegrade and often contain silicone, electronic parts and batteries, which can't go in mainstream recycling. At last count, 48% of us in the UK own or have owned, a sex toy, and that's a big problem. Your Rampant Rabbit could still be rampant thousands of non-biodegradable years later.

THE SEXTAINABLE REVOLUTION

It's enough to make you put your sex life to bed forever. But there are innovative companies dedicated to filling the ecological deficit.

Let's tackle that condom mountain first. Sustain Natural is a US-based company leading the charge on ethical prophylactics. It's

a certified B Corporation (a legal standard that ensures the business interests of investors balance with those of the environment, employees and customers) and its products are chemical-free, organic, fair trade and vegan. "Our products are not only good for you, but also good for the earth," says cofounder Meika Hollender. "The ultimate goal is to only create net-positive products." Though no one has cracked the fully biodegradable condom conundrum as yet, Meika argues that Sustain Natural's are the closest you will get. "We reimagined the manufacturing process to eliminate the formation of nitrosamine, which is a known carcinogen. Our latex also comes from one of the most sustainable rubber plantations on the planet. Plus, preventing unplanned pregnancy has incredibly positive impacts on the environment."

Other brands are also fighting the good fight – Glyde has been making ethical, plant-based condoms for over 20 years; German brand Einhorn makes eco-friendly, vegan condoms; and for every one of Sir Richard's vegan condoms sold, one is donated in the developing world. Even lube is getting in on the action – last year Good Clean Love's Almost Naked became the first-ever carbon-neutral lubricant.

"Your Rampant Rabbit could still be rampant 1,000 years later"

GOOD VIBES

Want to get off and get down with the revolution? Why not try reaching an eco-friendly orgasm with the Gaia Echo, the world's first recyclable and biodegradable vibrator, which is made from Biofel, a starch-based bioplastic. Alternatively, you could opt for a solar-powered vibrator by California Exotic, or a Gläs Callisto Clear Glass Dildo, which – the company insists – won't shatter, but will offer an earth-shattering orgasm.

If you do already own an offending plastic vibrator, sex toy brand Love Honey will accept any battery-operated toy in a recycling scheme brilliantly titled 'Rabbit Amnesty'.

Award-winning sex educator Alix Fox has lots to say about making your sex life greener. She recommends NobEssence (yes, that's its name) for hand-sculpted wooden dildos, which, she assures us, are "highly polished to avoid splinters", and also Sway, a slick subscription service that curates female-friendly, ethical sex products that it sends to your door every month. "I think it's important to educate ourselves," ➤

she says. "I respect heyepiphora.com and dangerouslilly.com, which dive deep into the science behind the safety of sex products; busting myths, exploring ethics and blowing BS claims out of the water." Sex education for the win.

WHO SAVES THE WORLD? GIRLS!

"Now, with the anxiety and engagement around climate change, there's a new wave of predominantly female-owned businesses proposing eco-sexual solutions to a number of sex and environment related problems," says Nichi Hodgson, author of *The Curious History Of Dating*. "The great thing is that it's dominated by women, who have previously been under-represented in sex brands and start-up culture."

It seems that sisters are, in fact, doing it for the planet. Yes Yes Yes is an organic intimacy company founded by women, for women, specialising in natural lubricants. "The environmental impact of our products is of fundamental value to us," its founders Sarah Brooks and Susi Lennox tell us. "We seek to 'change the world from the inside', and respect human health, wildlife and the environment. This is reflected in our carefully chosen organic, plant-based ingredients and recyclable, FSC-accredited packaging."

Hanx is another female-backed company, selling fair-trade and vegan condoms marketed towards women. Vegan brand Lovability is also female-founded, makes condoms, lube and body sprays with names like 'Hallelubeyah' and 'Moregasm Mist', and even donates a chunk of its profits to Planned Parenthood.

ECO-CONSCIOUS COUPLING

For some, buying an eco-friendly vibrator and a pack of vegan condoms is not enough. In fact, there's a whole movement committed to sexual sustainability: eco-sexuality. The term was coined by porn star turned sex educator Anna Sprinkles, who believes the earth is "your lover, not your mother".

Eco-shaggers are usually vegan, will avoid having children in order to reduce overpopulation, and may even engage in sexual practices involving plant life, or watch vegan porn... we'll leave this one up to your imagination. Eco-sexuals often find partners through apps such as Grazer and Vegan Eyes in the UK, or US dating site Green Singles, which has been around since 1996. "The original membership was mostly comprised of older, hardcore environmental activists, but now Green Singles also

attracts eco-focused millennials," says Jill Crosby, the site's CEO.

"The original idea of eco-sexuality was not about consumerism. It was about things like carving your own dildos out of courgettes because vibrators use up so much electricity," explains Stephanie Theobald, author of *Sex Drive: On The Road To A Pleasure Revolution*. "It's also about appreciating nature in a sexual way. Have more sex outdoors - you'll have much more ecstatic orgasms."

Eco-sexuality is great for cash-strapped millennials, too, as most of it is free. "Many household objects can be very fun in sexual scenarios," says Stephanie Alys, founder of sex-toy brand Mystery Vibe. "Ice for temperature play, a scarf for tying your partner up, or a clean wooden spoon for spanking. Get creative!" You could, of course, just take matters into your own hands.

Eco-sexuality is great for cash-strapped millennials

SEXUAL HEALING

The most eco-friendly way to have heterosexual sex can, however, be the one with the most consequences. A large number of eco warriors are opting to use nothing at all, trusting the rhythm method and apps such as Natural Cycles (which claims to be 93% effective) to prevent pregnancy. However, this doesn't prevent STIs and isn't a foolproof means of contraception. A Swedish hospital reported that of the 668 women who sought abortions between September and December 2017, 37 were using Natural Cycles as their sole birth control. So playing it safe for the environment isn't always safe for you.

Then there's the fear that millennials and Gen Z-ers may stop having sex entirely. Which isn't as absurd as it sounds, when you look at the statistics. A recent survey found that millennial women are having sex 4.8 times a month, down from 6.3 times ten years ago, and another study found that Americans in their early twenties are 2.5 times more likely to be abstinent than their Gen X equivalents were at the same age.

So, no need to take sex off the agenda just yet. Thanks to innovative products inspired by our burgeoning consumer conscience, you can still bonk responsibly. Courgette dildos and wooden spoons, optional. ●

To read about one GLAMOUR staffer's experience trying out eco-sexual dating apps, go to Glamour.com



Photographs: Maurizio D. Iorio, Miffy Fretwell, Vera Lair at Stockbyte, Getty Images; GLAMOUR does not recommend the use of courgette dildos