Beyond the Big O

This orgasmic hormone may have new uses.

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Besides helping folks bond with others and prompting romantic feelings, the “love” hormone oxytocin—a chemical given off during sex and breast feeding—has a new role. According to scientists, oxytocin can alleviate shyness, end social hang-ups and even benefit those with autism.

In recent clinical trials, Swiss researchers found that overanxious patients who took nasal spray doses of the hormone 30 minutes before entering a social setting felt more at ease than those who didn’t receive the drug. Another report found that oxytocin treatments reduced people’s fear, making it easier for them to interact with others.

FYI: If you’re one of the 15 million Americans who suffer from some type of social phobia, these treatments aren’t ready quite yet. But fear not: U.S. pharmaceutical companies are developing possible treatments, such as pills and sprays, that might soon be coming to a drug store near you.

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