

70 to 80 per minute, rise to go to 100 during the earlier phases of sexual arousal, then climb to 130 during intense arousal and attain a peak of about 190 at orgasm. Blood pressure that starts at about 120 rises to 200 or even 250 at the sexual climax. Breathing becomes deeper and more rapid as arousal develops and then, as orgasm approaches, develops into prolonged gasping often accompanied by rhythmic moaning or grunting. At climax the face may be contorted, with mouth wide open and nostrils expanded, in a manner similar to that seen in an athlete in extremis, or someone fighting for air.

Another major change that occurs during sexual arousal is a dramatic shift in the distribution of blood, from the deeper regions to the surface areas of the body. This overall forcing of additional blood into the skin leads to a number of striking results. It produces not only a body that feels generally hotter to the touch—a sexual glow, or fire—but also certain specific changes in a number of specialised areas. At high intensities of arousal a characteristic sexual flush appears. It is most commonly seen in the female, where it usually begins in the region of skin over the stomach and upper abdomen, then spreads to the upper part of the breasts, then the upper chest, then the sides and middle region of the breasts and finally the undersides of the breasts. The face and neck may also be involved. In very intensely responding females it may also spread over the lower abdomen, the shoulders, the elbows, and, with orgasm, to the thighs, buttocks and back. In certain cases it may cover almost the whole body surface. It has been described as a measles-like rash and appears to be a visual sexual signal. It also occurs, but in fewer cases, in the male where, again, it starts in the region of the upper abdomen, spreads over the chest and then the neck and face. It occasionally also covers the shoulders, forearms and thighs. Once orgasm has been reached, the sex flush rapidly disappears, vanishing in reverse order to its sequence of appearance.

In addition to the sex flush and general vaso-dilation, there is also marked vaso-congestion of various distensible organs. This blood congestion is caused by 50