



You're sexier in springtime...
By Nina Malkin



"In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love," wrote Alfred Lord Tennyson in his poem *Locksley Hall*. The quote still rings true—if a bit quaint. Women as well as men get their fancies turned this time of year. And love? Perhaps. But sex? Definitely. Right now, nature and nurture are conspiring to kick start your libido.

"All of the senses are dramatically affected by the coming of spring—the warmth of the sun on your skin, the vivid colors and pungent scents, the sounds of the birds," says anthropologist Helen Fisher, Ph.D., author of *Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love*. "You're being bombarded by pleasant, exciting, novel stimuli, and novelty stimulates the neurotransmitter dopamine, which in turn triggers testosterone production. Testosterone is associated with the sex drive in both women and men."

But testosterone run amok isn't the only thing getting your juices flowing now. Find out the reasons you're feeling so frisky and looking so sexy...and learn how to maximize your springtime appeal.

Daylight can be sexy

Officially we changed the clocks to "spring forward" on March 11th, and that influx of sunshine is key. "Light affects the pineal gland, which regulates melatonin," explains Dr. Fisher. "In winter the pineal gland is more active, creating more melatonin, which can make people sluggish and groggy. In spring, melatonin production is reduced, enabling people to feel a literal lightness of being. More light makes you more energetic and optimistic."

Sunlight also encourages spring flora to stir us up further. "Chlorophyll, the substance in plants that captures light energy, works overtime in spring," says work/life balance expert Jeff Davidson, author of *Breathing Space*. "The smell that plants exude stimulates us. In fact, if you were to spend time in a climate-controlled greenhouse during the middle of winter, you'd begin to experience spring-like sensations."

Light and heat also makes us apt to eat less and play more. "In the fall, our bodies naturally go into hibernation mode to store fat for winter survival, so we reach for heavy carbohydrate-rich foods like pasta," says sexologist Dr. Trina Read. "With spring and its friend, sunshine, we're inclined toward lighter fare." Physical activity tends to increase in spring as well, so if eating less and exercising more means you've lost some weight, you'd naturally have greater awareness of your body now—and be more apt to flaunt it. As soon as temperatures start to climb, we start shedding clothing and showing skin. "We say it's more comfortable and it is, but it's also display behavior—the peacock quivering his tail," says Dr. Fisher.

Celebrating sexuality

Spring has long been the season for frisky festivals and racy rites. "For thousands of years, cultures around the world have celebrated springtime rites and festivals representing rebirth and regeneration," says Sera Beak, author of *The Red Book: A Deliciously Unorthodox Approach To Igniting Your Divine Spark*. "People witnessed their world becoming more fertile: seeds sprouting, eggs hatching, animals getting friskier."

During the Spring Equinox, many pre-Christian pagan cultures observed a holiday called Ostara that involved fire rituals and dancing with ribbons and flowered garlands. "Sometimes after the festivities, couples would wander out into the fields for some good old-fashioned romps, which was believed to quite literally and metaphorically help fertilize the community and the soil," says Beak. So we're certainly not saying that anyone should hop into bed just because of this history, but let's just leave it at there being a long-running precedent to spring flings.

Springing into action

So, how to use your seasonal sexiness to your advantage? First, take a big boost of confidence from the fact that everyone around you is feeling more open, excitable and body-conscious now. That cutie in the supermarket probably is checking you out, it's not your imagination, so go ahead—smile back! Or say something clever to the cute stranger on the bus or the next yoga mat.

Next, spruce up a little. "Spring cleaning isn't just for your apartment," says April Masini, author of *Date Out Of Your League*. "Give yourself a spring makeover—starting with a great new haircut." Adjust your wardrobe as well, to wear sunnier colors (you too, fellas—real men do wear mint green, bright yellow, even pink!). Once you're satisfied with the new you, Masini suggests you re-do your online dating profile with cute, spring-worthy photos. "Nothing says 'not that interested' more than a picture of you all bundled up now."

Then, get out there—literally. Whether looking to meet new people or deciding what to do on dates, the outside is on your side. Have lunch in the park and dinner al fresco. Scrap the indoor spinning class for a hike or a real bike ride. Say yes to invites to picnics and barbecues, or as Beak suggests, host a spring fire ritual of your own at a nearby beach. "Give each guest two pieces of biodegradable paper," she explains. "On one, have them write something they want to shed from their wintry past — excess pounds, a negative behavior, an unhealthy relationship — and on the other, something they want to invoke for their present and future—new love, better sex, a healthier lifestyle. Gather around the bonfire and one by one, throw the first piece of paper into the flames while everyone cheers. Ask guests to take the second piece of paper home and plant it in their garden or in the woods." If each guest brings an unattached friend to the get-together, who knows, sparks may fly both literally and figuratively!

Nina Malkin is the author of An Unlikely Cat Lady: Feral Adventures in the Backyard Jungle.