

TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ORAL SEX

WHAT IS ORAL SEX?

Oral sex is when someone puts his or her lips, mouth or tongue on a man's penis, a woman's genitals (including the clitoris, vulva, and vaginal opening), or the anus of another person.

ORAL SEX TERMS

Fellatio is the technical term used to describe oral contact with the penis. *Cunnilingus* describes oral contact with the clitoris, vulva or vaginal opening. *Anilingus* (sometimes called "rimming") refers to oral contact with the anus.

HOW COMMON IS ORAL SEX?

Oral sex is common among those who are sexually active. According to a national survey, over 80% of sexually active youth and adults ages 15-44 years reported having had oral sex at least once with a partner of the opposite sex.¹

STI TRANSMISSION

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be spread through oral sex. If one is exposed to an infected partner, anyone can get an STI in the mouth or throat, genitals, or rectum.

INCREASED RISK

Factors such as having poor oral health, bleeding gums or gum disease, sores in the mouth or on the genitals, and being exposed to pre-cum or cum of an infected partner have been suggested to increase the risk of HIV or STI transmission.

1. Leichter JS, Chandra A, Liddon N, Fenton KA, Aral SO. Prevalence and correlates of heterosexual anal and oral sex in adolescents and adults in the United States. *Journal of Infectious Diseases* 196, 1852-1859. 12-15-2007



PREVENTION

Using a condom, dental dam or other barrier method each and every time a person has oral sex may lower STI transmission.

IS ORAL SEX SAFER THAN VAGINAL OR ANAL SEX?

The risk of getting HIV from having oral sex with an infected partner (either giving or getting oral sex) is much lower than the risk of getting HIV from anal or vaginal sex with an infected partner. However, this may not be true for other STIs.

PREGNANCY

Oral sex with an uninfected person during pregnancy is safe. However, a partner should not blow air into the vagina during oral sex. It may cause an air embolism-air bubble trapped in a blood vessel-which can be harmful to the baby.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Understand and respect a partner's desires when it comes to oral sex. Not everyone likes it. If a partner doesn't want to engage in oral sex, don't try to force them. A conversation beforehand may put them at ease. Talk about STI status, negative or otherwise, oral sex likes and dislikes.

PLEASURE

Perhaps a partner has a preference for the way it is done or wants you to discover but is willing to give cues when done to their liking. Feel free to try new things with your partner's permission. When it comes to condoms and dental dams, try flavored ones!



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