

Sexual Health

ORAL SEX

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Oral sex is the stimulation of the external genitals (sex organs) by the mouth (sucking or licking). There are many terms used to describe oral sex acts:

- Cunnilingus (eating out, licking out) is the oral stimulation of the clitoris or vagina.
- Fellatio (giving head, blowjob) is the oral stimulation of the penis.
- Anal oral sex (rimming) is oral sex of the anus.

How risky is oral sex?

Oral sex is a low risk sexual activity and although the chance of transmitting infection is less with oral sex, there is still a risk. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, syphilis and HIV can all be transmitted through oral sex. The infection would enter through the throat or mouth.

What increases my risks during oral sex?

There are many things that can increase your risk of STIs and HIV when you are giving or receiving oral sex.

For partners giving oral sex:

- Having small cuts in your mouth (even if you do not know it) from dental work, brushing or flossing before/after oral sex, gum disease, or from eating sharp foods that cut your mouth.
- If the skin in your mouth or partners genitals is torn (even if it you do not know it) from rough or prolonged oral sex, gum disease (bleeding gums) or sores from an existing STI.
- If your partner is menstruating (having her period).
- Holding infected fluids such as semen, vaginal fluids or menstrual blood in your mouth for a long time or swallowing it.
- Performing oral sex on the anal region can lead to wholebody bacterial infections.

For partners getting/receiving oral sex:

- Having small sores or cuts in the vagina or on the penis.
- If your partner has oral herpes, chlamydia or gonorrhea, a throat infection, or bleeding gums from gum disease, small cuts or sores.

How can I make oral sex safer?

There are many things you can do to reduce the risk of STIs and HIV during oral sex.

- Use a latex or polyurethane condom for oral sex on men (flavoured condoms are ok to use unless it says for novelty use only).
- Use a modified condom or dental dam for oral sex on women (do not use plastic wrap).
- Try to avoid getting or keeping fluids such as semen, vaginal fluids or menstrual blood in your mouth.
- Do not have oral sex right after brushing or flossing your teeth (wait about 30 minutes).
- Use anti-bacterial mouthwash after oral sex.

If the only thing you have is a condom, you can modify it for oral sex on women.

How to modify a condom for oral sex on women:

- Check the expiry date of the condom.
- Open the condom and cut off the tip with scissors.
- Unroll the condom completely.
- Cut a straight line from the rim to the hole where the tip was.
- Open the condom to form a square and place it over the genital area of the person receiving the oral stimulation.

Remember...

Oral sex is sex! Although oral sex is considered a low risk activity, it is important to use protection and safer sex precautions. If you have had unprotected oral sex you should consider getting tested for STIs and HIV.

Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit.