

Sexually Transmitted: Protecting Yourself During Oral Sex

What are STIs?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections that pass from person to person during sex. STIs are caused by bacteria and viruses that infect the reproductive organs or the skin of the genitals. Some common STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, genital herpes, HPV (the virus that causes genital warts), and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS).

How are STIs spread?

When people have sex using the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus, STIs can spread from one person to their partner. Some STIs pass from person to person by skin contact during sex. Some types of STIs pass by contact with body fluids such as blood, semen, and fluids from the vagina.

What about oral sex and STIs?

Oral sex is when the mouth comes in contact with the penis, vagina, or anus. Many STIs, including HIV, can be spread during oral sex.

Oral sex is just one way STIs are spread. It is important to know that STIs pass from person to person much more easily by vaginal and anal sex.

How can I protect myself during oral sex?

You can protect yourself during oral sex. Try not to have contact with skin, semen, and vaginal fluid. You can use a condom or put a latex square or plastic wrap over the genitals to lower the chance of infection.

Keep the fluids from the vagina out of your mouth.

- ◆ Use a small, thin, square of latex (sometimes called a “dental dam.”) Place the latex square over the area around a woman’s vagina when you have oral sex.
- ◆ You can buy latex or plastic squares, or you can make one yourself from a latex or plastic condom. You can also use plastic wrap.
- ◆ Cut the top and bottom off the condom. You’ll have what looks like a tube. Cut one side of the tube and you will have a large square of latex.

Keep semen from the penis out of your mouth.

- ◆ Put a condom on the man’s erect penis before you have oral sex.
- ◆ Use condoms that are not lubricated and that do not have spermicide on them.
- ◆ You can also use flavored lubricants on the condoms.

Keep bacteria from the anus away from your mouth:

- ◆ Use a latex or plastic square to cover the anus while you have oral sex.
- ◆ Before anal contact, gently wash the anal area.

What are other ways to lower the chances of passing STIs by oral sex?

- ◆ Don't have oral sex when either person has cuts or sores in the mouth or around the vagina or penis. When there are open sores, it is more likely that STIs can spread.
- ◆ It may be a good idea not to brush your teeth right before you have oral sex. Brushing your teeth may cause little cuts or rough spots inside your mouth.
- ◆ If you don't have a condom, the man should not ejaculate into the mouth of his sexual partner.

You can protect yourself from STIs.

Oral sex is just one way STIs are spread. Remember that STIs pass from person to person through vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

Here are the basics when it comes to preventing STIs:

- ◆ You can decide not to have any kind of sex involving the penis, vagina, mouth or anus. That is the only sure way to prevent STIs.
- ◆ Decide for yourself when you will have sex. You can choose not to have sex when you don't have protection.
- ◆ Have sex only with one person who has sex only with you.
- ◆ Use a condom (for men or women) every time you have vaginal or anal sex.