

# sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

## wildfact

73% of UA students have had oral sex. 71% have had vaginal sex. (2016 Health and Wellness Survey, n=3,113)

## Can you get an STD from oral sex?

Yes, you can. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs/STDs) can be contracted through oral sex – whether it's a “blow job” or “going down” on a partner. Herpes, chlamydia, and gonorrhea are just a few of the infections spread by oral sex, and you can't always tell if someone has an infection or not. The Herpes Simplex virus can be readily transmitted by skin-to-skin contact even when sores are not visible.

Of recent interest is the research, indicating that Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), particularly Type 16, causes most oral cancers that usually occur later in life. HPV is spread through direct contact with the skin, genitals, mouth, and anus.

Does this mean you shouldn't have sex (oral or otherwise)? No. But the research indicates that people (ages 9-26) should get vaccinated against HPV. Gardasil-9 and Cervarix vaccines are extremely effective in protecting against HPV strains 16 & 18-the strains most strongly linked with cancers of the cervix, penis, anus, and mouth. Other STIs

may be spread during oral sex but are more commonly passed via vaginal or anal intercourse. These infections include hepatitis B, syphilis, HIV, and HPV (genital warts and cervical dysplasia).

Exposure to semen, “pre-cum,” blood, or vaginal fluid increases the chance of getting an STI. Both the giver and the receiver are at risk. You can reduce your STI risk by using a (flavored) condom when performing oral sex on a penis or using a latex dam (a very thin 5" x 5" square that lays over the vulva) when going down on a woman. Dams can be used for oral-anal sex, too. Buy them at Campus Health or online.

If reading this gets you worried about what you've done in the past, take action. Find out your STI status. You can get confidential, convenient STI tests at Campus Health, Planned Parenthood, or the Pima County Health Department. For more info, see [www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org) or [www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu).



[www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu)

Have a question? Email it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)



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