

How to have oral sex



FAST FACTS

- Oral sex means using your mouth and tongue to stimulate your partner's genital or anal area, providing sexual pleasure.
- Different people like to give and receive oral sex in different ways, so take time to explore what your partner enjoys.
- There is very low risk of HIV infection from oral sex (unless one of you has genital/mouth sores or bleeding gums).
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as [herpes](#), [gonorrhoea](#) and [syphilis](#) can be passed on through oral sex.
- Using a condom or a dental dam will help protect you from STIs.
- Do not have oral sex if either of you has sores in or around your mouth, vagina, penis or anus, or if the person giving oral sex has bleeding gums. These could be a sign of infection and put you at higher risk of passing on STIs including HIV.

'Going down', 'giving head', 'blow jobs' ... there are many different names for oral sex. But what is oral sex? And does it come with any risks?

Whether you are thinking about having oral sex for the first time or just want some more information - read on for tips on how to have oral sex safely and pleurably, and answers to some of the most common questions.

What is oral sex?

Oral sex means using your mouth and tongue to stimulate your partners' genital or anal area.

Oral sex can be a good way to discover new pleasures with your partner, but deciding whether you want to do it is a very personal choice – not everyone likes it and not everyone tries it!

As with any type of sex, it's important that both people are enthusiastic about doing it.

Top tips for oral sex

A lot has been written about how to give the best oral sex. But the truth is that different things work for different people.

There's a whole variety of ways to lick, suck and stimulate - different people may like to give and receive oral sex in different ways. Remember that it can take a while to work out what makes someone feel good.

You may feel nervous before having oral sex – whether you're giving it or receiving it. The best thing to do is to carry on communicating with your partner. Ask them to tell you what feels nice and let them know when you are enjoying something.

If you're happy and comfortable with the person you're with then oral sex can be a great way to get physically closer and learn what turns each other on. But remember that you can pause or stop at any point you want, and the same is true for your partner. Just because you have started something doesn't mean you need to continue – stopping is actually very normal.

How do you give a man oral sex?

You can start oral sex on a man whether his penis is erect or not. It's a good idea to use your hand to touch him before you start to help work up to the sensation of oral sex.

If you're unsure how far you want him to penetrate your mouth, use your thumb and forefinger to make a ring around his penis, stopping it as far as you want to go. You can keep moving your fingers down slowly until you reach the point where it feels deep enough inside your mouth.

Many men find oral sex (also known as 'blow jobs') highly sensitive, so start gently and slowly and work up to a faster pace. You can experiment with different tongue, mouth and head movements to see what works best (but never use your teeth unless asked!).

Even if you decide to give a man oral sex, it doesn't mean that you have to let him ejaculate (or cum) in your mouth – the choice is yours. Of course, if he's wearing a condom this won't be such an issue, and it means you will both be protected against [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#). It's also entirely up to you how long you continue for.

How do you give a woman oral sex?

It's usually a good idea to spend some time kissing and touching before giving a woman oral sex. Take your time to explore her upper thighs and the area around her vagina first, to help her get aroused.

The most sensitive part of the vagina for a woman is the clitoris, which has more than 8,000 nerve endings. But the whole pelvic area is very sensitive. Gently part the outer lips of the vagina and look for the vaginal opening, and the hooded clitoris just above it.

Start off softly, using a relaxed tongue to make slow movements and work up to faster movements with a firmer, pointed tongue. You can experiment with making different patterns with your tongue

and try different rhythms – taking cues from your partner as to what she enjoys most.

How do you give oral-anal sex (rimming)?

Performing oral sex on your partner’s anus (also known as anilingus or rimming) can be part of any sexual relationship, whether gay, bisexual or straight.

If you are concerned about hygiene, ask your partner to wash first - water and a gentle washcloth should do the trick. You could also bathe together as part of foreplay.

You can begin by gently kissing and fondling the area around the anus including the perineum (the area of skin between the genitals and the anus). You can then work your way in to the anus by circling your tongue around the outer area and finally inserting your tongue.

You can try licking, sucking, probing and nibbling gently – taking cues from your partner about what feels good to them.

If you are performing it on a woman, don’t go from the anus to the vagina as this may transfer bacteria and cause infection.

Can I get HIV and STIs from oral sex?

The risk of HIV transmission from oral sex is very low. The main risks arise if the person receiving oral sex has an STI or sores on their genital area, or if the person giving oral sex has sores in their mouth or bleeding gums.

However other STIs such as [herpes](#), [gonorrhoea](#) and [syphilis](#) can still be passed on through oral sex. And some infections caused by bacteria or viruses can be passed on through oral-anal sex, such as hepatitis A or E.coli.

Infections can be passed on through oral sex even if there are no obvious signs or symptoms of the infection (such as sores). You should definitely avoid having oral sex if either of you has sores around your mouth, vagina, penis or anus. These could be a sign of an infection, so get them checked out by a healthcare professional.

Using a [condom](#) or dental dam (a thin, soft plastic that covers the vagina or anus) will protect you from most sexually transmitted infections. If you don’t have a dental dam you can also make an effective barrier by cutting a condom lengthways from bottom to top forming one piece of material that can be used like a dental dam.

Knowing you have the extra protection a condom provides can help make you feel more liberated and less inhibited during oral sex.

Talking to your partner about protection before you start having oral sex will help things go more smoothly. This can be embarrassing, but it’s an important part of having sex – and if you find it too difficult to discuss then it could be a sign that you aren’t ready to start having oral sex just yet.

Should I have oral sex?

It’s a big decision to start having oral sex, and it’s important that you and your partner are ready to start exploring in this way.

Whether it’s giving or receiving oral sex, no one should do it because they feel forced to.

Lines like “it doesn’t mean we’ve had real sex – you’ll still be a virgin”, or “if you don’t want sex then you should at least go down on me”, or “it’s not as risky as having intercourse”, all suggest pressure and coercion. Remember that oral sex should be fun for both of you. If one person is doing it because they feel pressured, it can sour the whole experience.

Deciding whether to have oral sex is a very personal thing. The main things to consider are whether it feels right, and whether you and your partner are both sure. Our article [‘Am I ready for sex?’](#) will help you think about this.

Photo credit: ©iStock.com/roundhill



Sources:

[NHS 'Sex activities and risk'](#)

[Terrence Higgins Trust 'Oral sex and HIV'](#)

[About relationships 'Tips and techniques for clitoral stimulation'](#)

[Family planning Association \(fpa\) \(2014\) 'Oral sex and sexually transmitted infections'](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) 'Oral sex and HIV risk'](#)

[NHS 'Fun with less risk'](#)

Last full review: 05 June 2017

Next full review: 05 June 2020

Last updated: 19 April 2018