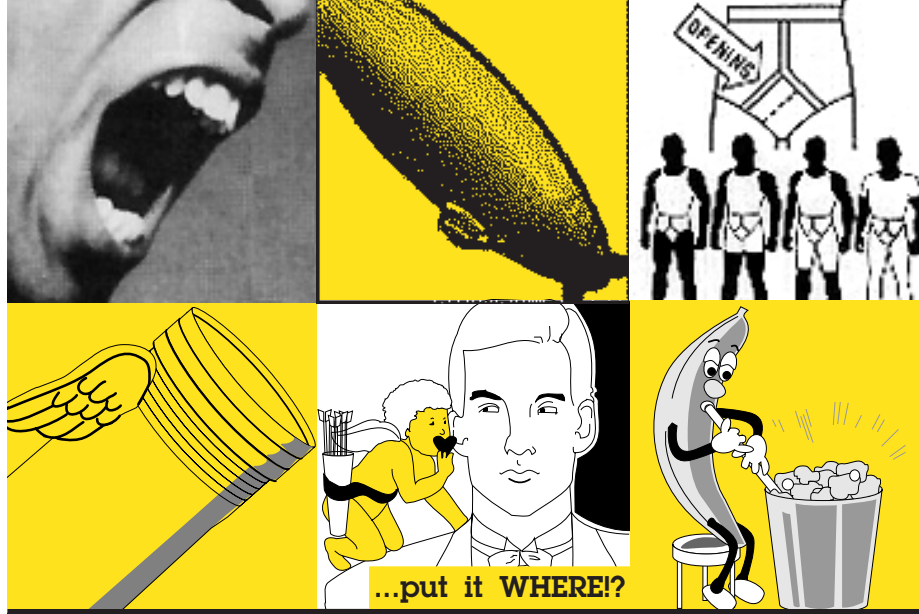


Oral Sex

Using Your Head

FOR GAY MEN AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN



A Common Sense Question & Answer Guide to Oral Sex & HIV/STD/HEPATITIS Transmission

"How Safe is Oral Sex?"

ORAL SEX, SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND HEPATITIS

There are different levels of risk, depending on the STD and the type of oral sex.

- STDs that cause sores and blisters (like syphilis and herpes) are **easy** to get from **all** types of oral sex - getting or giving.
- Gonorrhea and chlamydia can be spread by sucking or getting sucked.
- Having an STD may increase your chances of getting or spreading HIV.
- Hepatitis A and B are both preventable by vaccination (shots).

REMEMBER: 'Low Risk', Does Not Mean 'No Risk'

ORAL SEX AND HIV

There are reports of people getting HIV from oral sex. However, because many reports may have included people who also engaged in anal sex, it is difficult to determine if HIV infection was due to anal or oral sex. While the actual risk from oral sex alone is not known, it appears to be low. The available evidence suggests that:

- HIV is **not easy** to get or spread through oral sex.
- It is **much, much** easier to get HIV from receptive and sex without a condom than from receptive or getting or spreading HIV, including:
 - A number of things could increase your chances of getting or spreading HIV, including:
 - Bleeding gums, gum disease, or mouth sores
 - The amount of virus in the semen.
 - Having an STD.

(See chart on reverse for more information about HIV and each STD.)

- Even though the chance of getting HIV from oral sex is low, the consequences of HIV infection are life changing. You may decide that it isn't worth taking the chance and avoid oral sex or have sex only with partners you are sure have the same HIV status as you do. Or you may feel that because the risk of HIV from oral sex is so low, you are willing to take your chances.
- Some STDs like syphilis have more serious consequences than others. About 1 in 50 (2%) of HIV-infected gay men who get syphilis get syphilis of the permanent brain damage.
- Frequent throat tests for gonorrhea and chlamydia and blood tests for syphilis can help get those infections treated early reducing the spread to others and preventing complications.

INFORMATION & SERVICES

STD Testing, Treatment and Hepatitis Vaccination
 San Francisco City Clinic..... (415) 487-5500
 356 7th Street (between Folsom and Harrison)
 San Francisco, CA 94103
www.sfcityclinic.org

HIV Prevention and Health Service Information
 For a complete list of HIV prevention, care, and testing services in San Francisco visit the SFDPH, HIV Prevention Section web site at: www.SFHIV.org
 Click on the *Our Services* button on the top of the page to find services

Other Resources
 Syphilis testing made easy: Sign up on-line, drop by a nearby lab for the test, and get your results on line.
www.STDtest.org

Let a sex partner know by e-mail that you have an STD and they need to get checked out
www.INSPOt.org

Need help telling a partner they may have been exposed to HIV?
 Use InSpot.org or visit www.HIVdisclosure.com
ask.tell@sfdph.org 415-820-1590

San Francisco AIDS Hotline ... 415-863-AIDS

Sexual Health Services including Hepatitis Vaccination for Gay Men
 Magnet
 4122 18th Street (at Castro) 415-581-1600
 San Francisco, CA
www.Magnetsf.org

Developed by:
 The San Francisco Department of Public Health,
 STD Prevention & Control and the HIV Prevention Section
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To obtain copies of this brochure, please contact the HIV Prevention Section at 415-703-7278 or the STD Prevention and Control Section, SFDPH at 415-355-2000

"How easy is it to get HIV, STDs and hepatitis from Oral Sex?"

Only you can decide what you will or won't do. To decide, consider these questions.

- Not all STDs or hepatitis are easily passed through oral sex. Read the chart inside to learn which diseases are more common and which are easier to spread through oral sex.
- HIV is **not** easily passed through oral sex. However, it is possible that bleeding gums, mouth sores, or having cum in the mouth could increase your chances of HIV infection. Know what may increase the risk of infection.

"What are my chances of having sex with someone infected with HIV or another STD?"

- To get HIV or an STD from oral sex, your partner must have that disease.
- Know what diseases you are likely to be exposed to and how they are passed.
- For example, about 1 in 4 (25%) gay men in San Francisco are infected with HIV. Therefore, your chances of having sex with an HIV positive partner are high. Keep in mind that some HIV-infected persons don't know they are infected.
- STDs and hepatitis A & B are much more easily spread during oral sex than HIV.
- About 1 in 50 (2%) gay men and other men who have sex with men have syphilis while about 1 in 10 (10%) gay men and other men who have sex with men have gonorrhea or chlamydia.

"What can happen to me if I get the disease?"

Once you've decided, talk to your partner. The decisions are yours.

- Even though the chance of getting HIV from oral sex is low, the consequences of HIV infection are life changing. You may decide that it isn't worth taking the chance and avoid oral sex or have sex only with partners you are sure have the same HIV status as you do. Or you may feel that because the risk of HIV from oral sex is so low, you are willing to take your chances.
- Some STDs like syphilis have more serious consequences than others. About 1 in 50 (2%) of HIV-infected gay men who get syphilis get syphilis of the permanent brain damage.
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"How can I reduce my risk?"

Any of these methods may reduce your risk for STDs, HIV and hepatitis. Some are more effective than others.

- For maximum protection, use **non-lubricated latex condoms**. If you don't like the taste, try flavored condoms like mint or banana.
- Be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B

FOR SUCKING & GETTING SUCKED

If you choose not to use condoms:

- Be aware pre-cum contains HIV and therefore you may be exposed even if you avoid cum.
- Don't take cum in your mouth.
- Avoid sucking or rimming if you have bleeding gums, gum disease or mouth sores. Those could make it easier for HIV, STDs and hepatitis to enter the body.
- Look closely for sores or blisters on the genitals, mouth or lips.

FOR RIMMING

Using a barrier could also protect you from herpes. Wash up before and after rimming. Very small amounts of shit can spread germs like shigella and salmonella.

Sexually active gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men should get routine sexual health screenings including being tested for HIV every 6 months and for all other STD's every 3 months.

In this brochure, we define ORAL SEX as:

SUCKING COCK (OR GETTING SUCKED)
 Mouth-Penis Contact
 "Head"
 "Fellatio"

RIMMING
 Mouth-Anus Contact
 "Analingus"

Photograph by Jim James