Dear Alice,

I see that a lot of people are pondering whether to spit or swallow during oral sex. The whole thing kind of grosses me out. Is it OK to do the deed with a condom present? Is it less pleasurable for the guy?

thanks,

Curious

Answer

Dear Curious,

To spit or to swallow, that is the question. How you choose to deal with a partner’s ejaculate is really up to you and what feels comfortable. That being said, not only is it okay to use a condom during oral sex, it’s encouraged as using a barrier method of contraception during sexual activity can help protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). There often are mixed thoughts about the feel of condoms — it may feel great to some, while others report they can't feel as much. To be sure you and your partner(s) are having a mutually pleasurable and comfortable experience, it might be good to talk with your partner(s) about each other’s sexual preferences and boundaries.

Sexual experiences are best when all partners are enjoying themselves. If you’re grossed out by the idea of tasting, spitting, or swallowing ejaculate, or by oral sex in general, it’s likely that you don’t find the experience particularly pleasurable. Condoms, when used properly, are a reliable option for keeping your partner's semen out of your mouth. They also offer protection against the passing of sexually transmitted infections [2], such as gonorrhea and syphilis, among others. Just as you’re talking about your likes and dislikes regarding sex, you could talk about getting tested for STIs, too.

Keep in mind, Curious, not all condoms are the same — there are options in different materials, flavors, and colors [3]. If you’re open to performing oral sex, but want to avoid the mess, it might be an opportunity to for you and your partner(s) to explore the different condom options on the
market. You might even incorporate it into your foreplay so it’s more exciting for everyone involved. During this process it’s helpful for you to think about what flavors and textures you prefer as well.

It’s also worth noting that giving oral sex and receiving your partner’s ejaculate don’t have to come as a package deal. For example, a partner can pull out prior to climax, or they can notify their partner when they’re about to come so that they can stand clear. You can also check out the Go Ask Alice! Sexual & Reproductive Health archives for more on how to handle this situation.

Talking about feelings, options, and what one will and won't do sexually before you engage in sexual activity can help reduce worries about what you might be asked to do in the heat of the moment. Doing this will hopefully result in pleasure for everyone involved. The good news is that if it doesn't feel right to you now, or in the future, know that you don't have to do it.

Alice!
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