Dear Alice,

I will be getting married in June. My fiancé and I are both virgins and intend to be until that night. How can I minimize the pain of first-time sex as well as maximize the pleasure of our honeymoon.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials! Getting married can be both exciting and scary for many couples, particularly if having penetrative sex for the first time is part of your wedding plans. People's first time experiences can be romantic, exciting, sensual, fun, passionate, awkward, embarrassing, uncomfortable, disappointing, or any combination of those feelings. Taking some time to explore yourself, each other, and setting realistic expectations for yourselves could set you up for a wonderful wedding night.

To make the most out of your first experience, you may want to first talk with your fiancé about if, or what, you want to or are interested in engaging in sexually before the wedding. Depending on how sexually active you already are as a couple, you may want to leave extra time and energy to get to know each other's bodies and pleasure zones before jumping into vaginal or anal sex if either or both might be what you're both excited about. It's also possible to explore your own body in preparation for your wedding night, that way you can let your fiancé know what you enjoy and what you don't. If you two are waiting until after the wedding to engage in any activity, you might consider doing it in the morning or the day after the wedding so you're rested and ready to explore each other in a leisurely way, without fighting the urge to sleep after the celebration or stray knocks on the bedroom door. You could start by experimenting with touching, massaging, caressing, kissing, mutual masturbation, and oral sex to give you and your fiancé an opportunity to sexually connect. Sometimes these activities are just as, or more, satisfying than penetrative sex. Learning how to touch and fully arouse each other before attempting other activities may help minimize discomfort or pain and maximize pleasure. For instance, being more turned on can help folx with a vagina become more lubricated, which can ease penetrative sex and make it more pleasurable. If your partner has a penis and you want to use a condom, being fully erect and aroused will make it easier to put it on — which may also be lubed for mutual pleasure!
As you learn how your bodies fit together, you and your fiancé can try some of the following tips to help you boost your bedroom bliss:

- Focus on touching, kissing, and caressing each other in ways that heighten arousal before penetration.
- Try to relax and take it slowly.
- Talk with each other about what feels good and how you both like to be touched.
- Experiment with various positions.
- Create a pleasure chest that includes safer sex materials such as water-based lube, internal and external condoms (if you’re trying to prevent pregnancy or STIs if you aren’t monogamous), books about sex, and other products for sex play, such as massage lotion or oil, an erotic movie or book, or a vibrator. You may want to check out Babeland for sex tips, toys, books and more.
- To help ease penetration, add a dab of water-based lube on the opening of the vagina or anus and to the inside of the condom (if one is being used) before it’s unrolled, and also to the outside of the penis, toy, or the condom. Reapply as often as necessary to ease any discomfort and increase pleasure.

While many individuals worry about discomfort or pain the first time they have sex, not all couples have this experience. It’s possible for you and your fiancé to have a wonderful, pain-free first time. However, if you or your partner feel discomfort, it’s critical for there to be clear communication during sex. It also helps when all partners are fully aroused, have enough lubrication — both what the body produces and what may be added — and are as relaxed as possible. If you’re still feeling discomfort or pain after trying these strategies, you might try taking a break from sex; you can always come back to it later.

Lastly, remember that it’s not uncommon for the first time to be less extraordinary than expected. Sometimes one or both partners don’t orgasm. Other times, one partner may not be as physiologically aroused, leaving them more lubricated and comfortable at some moments more than others. Being patient and taking your time, talking clearly with your partner, and learning each other with regular practice are the best ways to allow the two of you to enjoy this newfound intimacy together. Even when the unexpected occurs, a couple’s first experience can still be meaningful, positive, exciting, pleasurable, and fulfilling. A sense of humor also goes a long way, and you have a lifetime together to learn and laugh with each other.

Alice!

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