

Abortion two weeks after sex — Possible? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I have a question concerning intercourse. A friend of mine entered his girlfriend, and after 30 seconds, felt uneasy and withdrew. He did not noticeably come inside her, but she had masturbated him earlier that night. Two weeks later she told him that she had gotten pregnant off the affair and had had an abortion. As experts, is this possible? I told my friend that the possibility of existing semen on the penis at the time of penetration may have caused fertilization, or that he may have excreted pre-ejaculate unknowingly. What are your thoughts?

Donnie

Answer

Dear Donnie,

Your two hypotheses about what could have happened are possible: sperm may have been in your friend's pre-ejaculate, and he may have come without realizing it. In both cases, this could have resulted in a pregnancy. From that point, multiple scenarios could have taken place that would have terminated the pregnancy, but before we get into that, let's take a step back and refresh ourselves on the ins and outs (excuse the innuendo) of sexual reproduction.

The road to pregnancy begins when a male's sperm meets a female's egg that has been released by her ovaries. This generally occurs after a man ejaculates into a woman's vagina during sexual intercourse but regardless of how it happens, if a viable sperm (which can live in both semen and pre-ejaculate) enters a woman's vagina and reaches a viable egg, it can result in pregnancy. The fertilized egg then travels down the fallopian tube that connects the ovaries to the uterus, multiplying into a ball of cells as it goes. Once it reaches the uterus it implants itself into the lining and voilá: pregnancy. The whole process from fertilization to implantation generally occurs over a period of six to twelve days. A pregnancy test (over-the-counter or clinically administered) can test positive as early as seven to ten days after conception when the production of human chorionic gonadotrophin hormone (HCG) begins (though the earlier it is taken, the higher the likelihood of a false negative).

Even with a positive at-home pregnancy test, before a woman can get an abortion it would need

to be confirmed by a health care provider through a physical exam and blood and urine tests. This would be followed by an ultrasound to determine how far along the pregnancy is and if it is progressing without complications. There are a number of options to terminate a pregnancy, which can include a [medical abortion](#) [2] or [in-clinic procedures](#) [3].

The usual time at which to perform an abortion is about six weeks after the last menstrual period, though it can be performed any time between one to twelve weeks after conception. Another possibility is that your friend's girlfriend may have used emergency contraception, the [morning after pill](#) [4]. This, however, is not an abortion. Emergency contraception, when taken within five days of unprotected sex, prevents the fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus.

Taking all of this into account, it is possible that your friend's girlfriend could have discovered her pregnancy and gotten an abortion within two weeks, though this window is extremely small. It is also possible that she could have gotten pregnant from a prior sexual encounter. Regardless of what exactly happened, or how/when your friend's girlfriend got pregnant, one thing to consider is the motivation for his doubts or discomfort with the situation. Mutual trust and open communication are pillars of a [healthy relationship](#) [5] and he may want to ask himself if those are lacking in his current relationship. Instead of calculating conjugal chronologies with his cronies; perhaps you could suggest he do so with his girlfriend. You may also offer he may find it helpful to talk to a counselor or psychologist about his relationship issues.

Alice!

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