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Where can I get dams for oral sex? ^[1]

Hey Alice,

Do you know where I can get dental dams for lesbian oral sex and why these are barely promoted compared to condoms?

— cedar

Answer

Dear cedar,

Three cheers for safer sex tools and kudos to you for seeking them out. Dental dams ^[2] (or just dams) are a particular type of barrier method that protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). When considering risk associated with sex between females, vaginal fluid or blood exchange during oral sex or other sex play has the potential to transmit infection from one partner to another. Though your question speaks to one type of sexual contact, you might also be interested to know that dams are useful at reducing risk of STI transmission during oral sex performed on a female (regardless of the gender of the person performing oral sex), and are also useful in oral-anal sexual contact, a.k.a. rimming (again, regardless of the gender of giver or receiver). Unfortunately, you also bring up a common observation as well — dams are indeed hard to find at times. But, there are still several places you can either purchase or obtain free dams for safer oral sex with your partner(s).

On the low- or no-cost end of the spectrum, a good place to start is your campus health center if you're a college student. Often, they provide safer sex materials, including dams. If they do provide these materials — but not dams — consider making a request. It may be that they don't have many of them or that they hadn't been requested before. If that's the case, your inquiry may increase availability for all students on your campus (you trend setter, you!).

However, if you're not a college student or are not keen on asking for them at your school, fret not! There are other places you can check out. Another promising stop for those seeking dams may be your local Planned Parenthood or you could check with your city's Department of Public Health. You might also consider purchasing your own supply of dams at a sex-positive stores like Babeland ^[3] or Good Vibrations ^[4]. No such store in your area? Both offer online sales of dams as

well as some other larger online retailers. So, as you're stocking up on other essentials, you can snag a few dams in your shopping cart before you click "purchase".

Feeling crafty and have access to male/external condoms? These condoms — sans lube — can easily be made into substitutes for dams. With scissors, **carefully** snip off the elastic band part and tip of the condom and then cut down its length. The resulting rectangular piece of latex (or polyurethane if someone is latex sensitive) is stretchable and can be used just like any other dam. If you're in a pinch, you can also use non-microwaveable plastic wrap.

Back to the latter part of your question, though: it's not exactly clear, but dam-finding difficulties may stem from the well-deserved attention given to condoms' effectiveness at preventing both pregnancy and infection transmission. Also, condoms were designed with sex in mind, while dams were originally created to help dentists focus on a particular part of the mouth during an oral procedure. Further, condoms tend to be less expensive than dams and that may be a factor as well.

Despite the challenges in your search thus far, hopefully these resources will lead you in the right dam-finding (and using) direction. And, you have certainly earned a pat on the back — you've done your fellow *Go Ask Alice!* readers a real service by asking how and where these safer sex tools can be accessed.

Here's to playin' it safe(r),

Alice!

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Published date:

Jun 18, 1999

Last reviewed on:

Nov 18, 2016

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