

Mutual masturbation ^[1]

Dear Alice,

If we are engaging in mutual masturbation, and I get semen on my hands, how long should I wait before touching my partner's vulva? What constitutes being safe in this case (referring strictly to birth control here)? What if I dry my hands with tissues? Will the remaining sperm die in a couple of minutes exposed to the air? Or do I have to wait longer to be safe?

Handy

Answer

Dear Handy,

Though it's many a person's first sexual activity, masturbation isn't only for solo play — it may be even more fun with company! Masturbation with more than yourself is often referred to as mutual masturbation. Whether solo or social, this activity is considered one of the safer forms of sex play. However, as you suggest, there is a risk of transporting your little swimmers to your partner. But fear not; there are a few precautions you can take to help prevent pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

While the risk of pregnancy is low, there are still ways to lower your risk further. When it comes (pun intended) to pregnancy prevention, try to avoid getting pre-ejaculate (sometimes called precum) or ejaculate on or near the vulva. Although the risk of pregnancy is significantly reduced if semen comes into contact with only the external parts of the vulva, there remains still a potential pregnancy risk. But, it's not just about pregnancy! If you, or your partner, have a STI and you get infected fluids or skin cells on your hands, it's possible to transmit it to one another. Drying your hands before touching your partner's genitals with tissues or a towel could be effective. But, washing and drying your hands thoroughly is recommended. You might also consider using a barrier method or other birth control options to help further minimize your risk (check out the [Contraception](#) ^[2] category in the *Go Ask Alice!* archives for more information on those options).

Besides being a lower-risk way to please your partner, you might also be wondering what other reasons folks might get into mutual masturbation. Well, consider the following:

- **Orgasmic precision.** Mouths, tongues, and other body parts can be a lot of fun. For some though, hands have skills and dexterity unmatched by many other body parts. Some folks find that manual stimulation produces a strong orgasms because hands can apply the right pressure, speed, and timing. They often have excellent stamina as well.
- **Main course or side dish.** This activity is quite versatile: it may serve as foreplay or to finish things off. It could be the primary activity you build up to, or one of many adventures you have during your tryst.
- **Sick of the same old thing.** Because there can be some shame and secrecy surrounding masturbation, this activity is a well-kept secret. Many couples have never tried it together. If you're in need of new, fun activities, this could be one to try. You may even learn a thing or two about how to please your partner.
- **What's in a name?** Hand job, J.O. (jerk off), rubbing, massage, stroking, shaking hands with Ms. or Mr. Happy, firing the Surgeon General... the list is endless. Perhaps it has so many names because it's spread so much joy.

Its versatility doesn't stop there. Don't forget, it may involve more than two people, [role-play](#) [3], fantasy, or toys. So try to get out your lube, turn down the lights, warm up your hands, and grab your towels. It's likely to be a fun (and safer) time.

Here's to the five digit disco,

Alice!

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