

Risk of pregnancy after masturbating or from pre-cum? ^[1]

(1) Dear Alice,

Recently my friends and I were having an argument about whether or not a woman could get pregnant from a man's pre-cum... so can she or not???

Thanx 4 the help,
Confused...

(2) Dear Alice,

If a man masturbates shortly before having intercourse, will the likelihood of the woman becoming pregnant be diminished?

— Just Wondering

Answer

Dear Confused... and Just Wondering,

Though your questions may be slightly different, they may be addressed by discussing the same core issue. Confused... the short answer is that it's possible to become pregnant from pre-ejaculate fluid (pre-cum). It was previously thought that, pre-cum itself doesn't contain sperm — but a recent small study suggests that sometimes, and for some people, it may. In that same study, some participants (assigned male at birth) also still had sperm left behind in their urethras from a previous ejaculation, even after urinating to “flush” it out. This suggests that there might be an eager stow-away on the pre-ejaculate cargo ship, meaning that contact with pre-cum is not without risk of pregnancy. With that in mind, Just Wondering, because sperm may be present in pre-ejaculate and is usually found in ejaculate, it would also follow that masturbating before having vaginal sex isn't likely to decrease the risk of pregnancy.

It may help to have a pre-requisite crash course on pre-ejaculate: When sexually aroused, pre-cum may be visible as a clear liquid at the tip of the penis. It's an alkaline fluid released by the Cowper's glands, which are located at the top of the penile urethra (the tube that semen and urine travels through), just below the prostate. Pre-ejaculatory fluid helps neutralize the urethra's

acidity, protecting sperm that will pass through the urethra during ejaculation (if you're curious about other bodily fluids — take a look at the Q&As in the [Go Ask Alice! Sexual Secretions](#) [2] category).

After ejaculation, whether by masturbation or sex with a partner, sperm may be left over in the urethra. There have been suggestions that urinating between ejaculations helps remove leftover sperm from the urethra. However, the previously mentioned small study demonstrated that even after urination, 40 percent of the pre-ejaculatory fluid samples collected still contained sperm. These findings don't conclusively prove that contact with pre-cum could result in pregnancy (given favorable circumstances), but it suggests that it may be possible. The study researchers also suggest that some folks may simply be more likely than others to have sperm present in their pre-ejaculate. However, it's nearly impossible to know who might fall into which category without an analysis of each person's pre-ejaculatory fluid. In any case, this newer information may have implications for those who practice the withdrawal method, a.k.a., the "pulling out," as a method of pregnancy prevention.

Whether pregnancy is concern or not, there may still be a risk of a sexually transmitted infections (STI) transmission from contact with pre-ejaculate. Using condoms or other barrier methods correctly and consistently can help reduce the risk of STI transmission as well as pregnancy during sexual contact. So, if you're wanting to stay away from those spunky swimmers in general, using either safer sex method from the beginning to the end of genital contact may be your best bet. On the hunt for more information on preventing STIs and pregnancy? Then check out Q&As in the [Safer Sex](#) [3] category of the [Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health](#) [4] archives.

Alice!

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