

Fingers... and other items in the bum — Safe? ^[1]

(1) Alice,

Is it safe for a man to insert fingers in his rectum? 'Cause I heard anal fisting can tear the anal wall and can be dangerous... But is finger anal stimulation dangerous as well?

Ann Sermee :) just kidding; I'm a guy

(2) Dear Alice,

I recently posted the question about the finger in the anus. I'd first of all like to thank you for your answer. It was, as usual, helpful. I think this web site is fantastic and incredibly healthy for everyone. Maybe, with the help of things like this, we'll actually get to the point someday when people can ask about things like this without having to need anonymity.

Anyhow, the reason I'm writing again is that I would like a little more info. Are there OTHER medical risks associated with anal penetration? What if the object is larger than a finger? Should penetration occur only so far?

— Experimenting

Answer

Dear Ann Sermee and Experimenting,

Asking these types of questions can be helpful as there are some aspects about anal stimulation and penetration that (for some folks) are considered taboo and are a challenge to talk about. Anal stimulation can be a fun and pleasurable way to explore your sexuality as long as you take a few precautions. And, as your questions suggest, a penis isn't the only object that can be used for anal pleasure: fingers (nails trimmed, please!), tongues, and pretty much any clean object with smooth edges and a flared base may be suitable, whether alone or with a partner! While your anal sphincters (the muscles that keep your bum puckered up) can stretch to accommodate various sizes and shapes, they understandably have their limits. The anus is a highly sensitive area for many people, which is why it can be extremely pleasurable to have it stimulated, and also why, for the most part, your body's pain receptors will tell you when something is too big or

in too far. But (no pun intended) as a general rule, folks can usually (and safely) insert objects up to about six and a half inches long.

A bit of anal anatomy might help you gain a clearer picture of the possibilities of anal stimulation, making these adventures less painful and more enjoyable. The anus and rectum (the area just inside the anus) are together about six and a half inches long. It also has two sphincters that are typically contracted very tightly (to keep waste from making unexpected appearances!). However, for this reason, it's crucial to make sure that whatever object you're using has a flared base (think of the bottom of a spade on a deck of playing cards). The sphincter muscles can squeeze involuntarily, which can pull objects into the anus. This could result in a trip to a health care provider to have an object removed — a decidedly unsexy and awkward ending to your exploration!

Two other features of the bum make it unique: first, the rectum is shaped like an “S” rather than a straight line, and second, the anus is not self-lubricating. For these reasons, making sure that objects are inserted slowly and that you're relaxed are good strategies to employ. Using a thick water- or silicone-based lube can also help get things moving — literally! And, remember that if you're enjoying anal stimulation with a partner, it is possible to pass on sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The tissue of the anus is thin and taut, making transmission more likely than vaginal activities. Cleaning any items inserted into the rectum thoroughly before and after, as well as using a barrier such as a condom, glove, or dam, is the best way to keep unwanted infections away when it's time to play. Now that you've got the low down on what's going on down below, consider these ideas and tips for a stimulating romp:

- **Give yourself (or a partner) a hand.** Anal fingering can be an enjoyable (not to mention educational!) way to make yourself or a partner feel good. Try using just one finger at first and perhaps graduating to one or two more later on. Stimulating the anal area in this way can help you explore the lay of the land while also providing plenty of pleasure! The main tip here is to trim those fingernails, wash your hands, and use a glove or condom on your fingers to prevent any damage or infections.
- **Be a tease: kiss, rub, or squeeze.** Penetration isn't the only option! Many people enjoy activities that loiter around the entrance, including kissing or licking (if you've got a partner involved), rubbing, or even just putting gentle pressure on the area around the anus. Just remember to always wash your fingers/object/mouth/etc. when moving them from the anus to any other part of the body to reduce the risk of infections.
- **If at first you don't succeed... try a different toy.** Even when you go slow and use lube, some objects just ain't gonna fit. That's why it's good to keep a few toys in your anal arsenal to test out as you decide what works best. Anal beads, anal vibrators, and butt plugs are great options, especially because they are all designed with those flared bases that are best for anal stimulation safety!

And, perhaps best of all, don't forget that the anus and rectum are conveniently located near the male prostate and both the female G-spot and legs of the clitoris, which means easy access to intense pleasure, whether you're flying solo or buddying up. If you're curious to hear even more ideas on ways to maximize anal pleasure and safety, consider checking out the [The Good in Bed Guide to Anal Pleasuring](#) by Dr. Debby Herbenick. You could also have a chat with a health care provider or a health promotion professional to get some more of your questions answered.

Alice!

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