Semen in mouth? Pregnant? [1]

(1) Dear Alice,

Can pregnancy be caused by swallowing the ejaculate during oral sex?

(2) Dear Alice,

I heard this from my sex ed teacher in high school, and I was wondering if he was correct. Can a girl get pregnant from having semen in her mouth? He said that if there are cuts inside her mouth, the sperm can get into the bloodstream and possibly get the girl pregnant.

Answer

Dear Readers,

Kudos to you for thinking critically about the sexual health information you’re receiving. To answer your questions, no, a person can’t get pregnant from semen that’s in the mouth or bloodstream. Pregnancy is only possible when semen enters the reproductive system through the vagina. If there’s no path for the semen to enter into the reproductive system, it’s impossible to become pregnant.

In order for pregnancy to occur, sperm needs to enter the vagina, swim through the opening of the cervix, up through the uterus, and into the fallopian tubes. Once it arrives in the fallopian tubes, it needs to join with an egg. The only way for sperm to reach these organs and an egg is by entering the body through the vagina. When semen is swallowed, it goes through similar processes as swallowed food. It begins to digest in the mouth, then in the stomach, and so on, until whatever cannot be utilized by the body is excreted. Sperm ultimately die from being broken down in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. What’s more, even if sperm lived in the GI tract, there are no pathways in which the GI tract would lead to the reproductive system. Similarly, sperm that gets into the bloodstream also cannot cause pregnancy, as it doesn’t lead directly to those reproductive organs.

It's good to note that although pregnancy is unlikely, it's possible to transmit sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as herpes [2], human papillomavirus (HPV) [3], gonorrhea [4], and chlamydia [5] during oral sex if one partner is infected. Practicing safer sex techniques, such as using condoms [6] or dental dams [7] during oral sex helps reduce the risk of contracting or transmitting STIs. Moreover, getting tested for STIs and asking any potential partners to do the same is recommended. That way, both partners know their statuses, and if infected, may seek treatment. For more information on this and related topics, check out the About Oral Sex
category of the *Go Ask Alice!* Sexual and Reproductive Health archives.

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Reproduction
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Sexual Questions
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Related questions
Risk of pregnancy after masturbating or from pre-cum?
HIV transmission from cunnilingus or from receiving oral sex?
What STIs are “testable” and who is infected, anyway?

Resources
Safer Sex Map (Morningside/ Barnard)
Alice! Health Promotion (Morningside)
Center for Student Wellness (CUMC)
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