Oral Sex and Sexual Health

What is Oral Sex?

Oral sex is when one person uses their mouth, lips, or tongue to stimulate their partner's genitals. This can involve kissing, licking, or sucking a partner's penis (fellatio), vagina (cunnilingus), or anus (anilingus).

Potential Risks

Like any sexual activity, oral sex carries potential risks. This includes transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as:

1. **Gonorrhoea**: This bacterial infection can be passed from the genitals to the throat, or vice versa.
2. **Syphilis**: Sores caused by this infection can be present in the mouth or throat, or on the genitals, making transmission possible during oral sex.
3. **Herpes**: This virus can be transmitted from the mouth to the genitals, or vice versa, even when sores are not present.
4. **Human papillomavirus (HPV)**: Certain strains of HPV can cause oral and throat cancers and can be passed through oral sex.
5. **Chlamydia and HIV**: While less common, transmission of these infections is possible through oral sex.

Protection

There are several ways to reduce the risk of STIs during oral sex:

1. **Dental dams**: A dental dam is a thin piece of latex that can be placed over the vulva or anus during oral sex.
2. **Condoms**: Using a condom during fellatio can help prevent the transmission of STIs.
3. **Regular testing**: Both partners should get tested regularly for STIs.

Communication

Good communication is a key part of healthy sexual activity. Partners should feel comfortable discussing their sexual history, STI status, boundaries, and preferences. Consent is always essential – every person involved should agree to each activity every time.

Oral Hygiene

Maintaining good oral hygiene can potentially reduce the risk of infections. Avoid oral sex if you or your partner has sores, cuts, or ulcers in or around the mouth, genitals, or anus.

HPV Vaccination

The HPV vaccine can protect against the types of HPV that most commonly cause oral and other cancers. It is recommended for both boys and girls.

This information is intended for general informational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have any health concerns, please see your healthcare provider.

Last updated: May 2023

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