



# AFAO Fact sheet

## Oral sex between men

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**NB: This basic fact sheet is also relevant for women performing oral sex on men. See below for more information about oral sex and women.**

### **HIV transmission can occur through oral sex between men**

There are a number of documented case reports which confirm that HIV transmission can occur during oral sex between men.

#### **What we don't know —**

##### **The exact risk of HIV transmission through oral sex**

HIV transmission does not occur very often through oral sex - anal sex without condoms remains the highest risk sexual activity for transmitting HIV

There is not enough evidence to specify the exact risk of HIV transmission during one episode of oral sex. Further, the risk increases if certain circumstances occur.

We do know from large studies that HIV transmission through oral sex occurs infrequently. We also know from these and other studies that anal sex without condoms carries a much greater risk.

We also know from the case reports involving HIV transmission during oral sex that particular circumstances increase the risk of HIV transmission occurring.

#### **What we do know —**

##### **The risk of HIV transmission increases in particular circumstances**

We know:

- HIV is transmitted through oral sex infrequently;
- Transmission usually occurs from the insertive to the receptive partner; and
- The risk of HIV transmission during oral sex increases if:
  - The insertive partner has a high viral load;
  - Ejaculation into the mouth occurs;
  - The receptive partner's mouth is breached in some way allowing HIV to enter.

##### **Things which make it more likely that the mouth will be breached (or is already breached)**

There are a number of factors which make it more likely that tears will occur in your mouth during oral sex or that tears already exist.

These are:

- Oral lesions particularly STDs
- Ulcers (which can be more common in people with HIV)
- Brushing or flossing teeth within two hours of activities such as unprotected oral sex
- Eating abrasive or spicy foods
- Dental disease

- Recent dental treatment
- Gingivitis (inflamed or bleeding gums)
- Certain prescribed and non-prescribed drugs which irritate oral tissues (eg.amphetamines)
- Allergies
- Trauma
- Piercings
- Oral herpes
- Rough or very vigorous oral sex

### **Things you can do to make tears occurring in your mouth during oral sex less likely**

- Avoid oral sex if you've:
  - eaten in the last couple of hours
  - recently brushed your teeth
  - currently have any conditions in the mouth (see 4 above)
- Gargle with salty water to see if any stings occur. If they do, it is likely you have cuts in the mouth
- Have regular dental check-ups (and avoiding oral sex for a day after dental visits if necessary)
- Have regular STD check-ups including the mouth

### **Ways of eliminating any risk**

- Oral sex between partners of the same HIV status carries no risk of HIV transmission.
- Using condoms eliminates any risk.

### **Oral sex and women**

Licking or sucking the vagina or vaginal lips is very safe in terms of HIV. There is very little HIV in a woman's vaginal juice, and saliva damages the virus. Dental dams are not necessary for protection against HIV but may help prevent the transmission of other sexually transmissible infections like herpes.

There are no reliable reports of anyone getting HIV from oral sex on a woman with HIV. Likewise, there is insignificant danger of a positive woman infecting a man by sucking his penis. Condoms can prevent both partners from other sexually transmissible infections.