

## Contraception/STD Prevention

**Q:** Using two condoms must be better than just one, right?

**A:** No. "If more than one condom is used ... one condom will rub directly against ... the second condom. This rubbing causes friction between the two materials and may cause the condoms to break. If the condoms break ... STDs and sperm may be passed between the partners. One condom used consistently and correctly will provide the next best protection (second to total abstinence) against STDs and unwanted pregnancy." —*Jamie Sclafane*

"Only one condom, whether it's [for a] male or female, should be worn at a time." —*Jennifer Fuentesilla*

**Q:** I don't use condoms because they don't fit me correctly. What else can I do to protect myself from STDs?

**A:** "The problem most often does not have to do with the size of a male's penis, but rather with the condom not being put on properly. ... The first thing to do is to make sure you are using condoms properly. [See "How to Use a Male Condom" on page 2.] If you have gone through all of these steps and the condom still does not fit properly ... look into buying a larger-size male condom. If this still does not work for you, asking a female partner to use a female condom (only for vaginal sex) may also be an option. The female condom is designed to fit the inside of the vagina, which makes it larger than a male condom."

—*Jamie Sclafane*

**Q:** What is the "best" form of birth control?

**A:** The only surefire way to avoid pregnancy is abstinence. However, "the most effective form of birth control is the one that you will use correctly, consistently, and cooperatively. ... A person can have the 'most effective' form of birth control, but if [the person and his or her partner] cannot realistically use it, it won't be effective against unplanned pregnancy."

—*Jennifer Fuentesilla*

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## By the Book

Recommended reading, courtesy of New York City-based sexuality educator Amy Levine:

- ❑ **Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships**, 3rd ed., by Ruth Bell (Three Rivers Press, 1998)
- ❑ **Deal With It! A Whole New Approach to Your Body, Brain, and Life as a gURL**, by Esther Drill, Heather McDonald, and Rebecca Odes (Pocket Books, 1999)
- ❑ **Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth—and Their Allies**, by Ellen Bass and Kate Kaufman (Harper, 1996)
- ❑ **The Teenage Guy's Survival Guide: The Real Deal on Girls, Growing Up, and Other Guy Stuff**, by Jeremy Daldry (Little, Brown, 1999)
- ❑ **The Underground Guide to Sexuality**, 2nd ed., by Michael J. Basso (Fairview Press, 2003)
- ❑ **What If Someone I Know Is Gay? Answers to Questions About Gay and Lesbian People**, by Eric Marcus (Price Stern Sloan, 2000)

## For More Info

### Sex, Etc.

[www.sxetc.org](http://www.sxetc.org)

Real-life stories from teens, expert advice, chats, and a comprehensive glossary of terms

### Go Ask Alice!

[www.goaskalice.columbia.edu](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu)

Searchable body, relationship, and sex information in a Q&A format

### ThinkMTV

[www.mtv.com/thinkmtv](http://www.mtv.com/thinkmtv)

Click on *Sexual Health* for sexual health information, news, videos, and links to resources.



## Write to Us!

We're taking your questions for next year. If there's something you'd like to know, please e-mail us (it's OK to leave out your name) at [currenthealth@weeklyreader.com](mailto:currenthealth@weeklyreader.com).



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## Everything Else You Wanted to Know About Sex ...

... but didn't know who (or how!) to ask

By Meredith Matthews

It seems everyone has a say in what you learn about sex. Your family decides how to handle discussions at home, and your school teaches you within the limits set by local and state lawmakers. Even the movie-rating-system folks control which sexual content is tame enough for a PG-13 and which gets slapped with an R.

But has anyone asked what *you* want or need to know about sex, sexuality, and your changing body? Maybe your questions fall outside the usual curriculum, or maybe you're shy about asking. There's no such thing as a stupid question, and it's important for you to have the information you need to make smart decisions. So we've asked sex educators which questions *they* get the most or find most interesting—and, more important, what the answers are.

### Anatomy

**Q:** What's the normal size for a penis?

**A:** "There is no specific normal size for a penis; it is different from person to person." —*Victor Esquivel, youth development educator, Planned Parenthood of San Diego & Riverside Counties (PPSDRC)*

**Q:** Does every girl have a hymen?

**A:** "No, not every girl is born with a hymen [a membrane that sometimes stretches across the vagina]. For girls that are born with a hymen, [it] can break during horseback riding, gymnastics, other forms of exercise, or ... the first act of sex." —*Jennifer Fuentesilla, peer education coordinator, PPSDR*

**Q: Will drinking Mountain Dew shrink/clog a penis?**  
**A:** No. “Mountain Dew could possibly make someone hyper ... and may cause some cavities ... but as for affecting [the] penis, [you’re] safe to drink it.”  
—*Jennifer Gallo, community health educator, Family Planning Services of Lorain County, Elyria, Ohio*

### Attitudes

**Q: If I’ve had sex already, are you going to say I’m a bad person?**

**A:** “No, I’m not here to judge you. I’d like you all to make choices that will keep you safe and healthy. If you’ve had sex, I hope that you used a condom to reduce your chances for pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections [STIs]. If you didn’t, I’d urge you to go for a checkup to make sure that you are healthy and that you remain healthy.”  
—*Elizabeth Schroeder, national sexuality educator and coeditor, American Journal of Sexuality Education*

### Sex

**Q: When a guy and a girl have sex, does he really pee inside her?**

**A:** “For a guy, [sex] usually includes ejaculation, when a whitish fluid comes out of the tip of his penis. This is not urine; it’s semen. Semen contains hundreds of millions of sperm, which is what can cause a pregnancy.”  
—*Elizabeth Schroeder*

“No, there is a valve that ... closes when a person is about to ejaculate, preventing [him] from releasing any urine.”  
—*Victor Esquivel*

**Q: Can a man still ejaculate if he has a vasectomy [surgery to keep sperm out of his semen]?**

**A:** “Yes. His ejaculation, however, will contain no sperm.”  
—*Jennifer Fuentesilla*

**Q: Can girls have erections?**

**A:** “Yes. Females can have an erection [of] their clitoris [sexual pleasure organ] or their nipples.”  
—*Jennifer Fuentesilla*

### Masturbation

**Q: If you touch yourself, will that mess you up at all?**

**A:** “No. Masturbation—or touching your own genitals for pleasure—can’t hurt you physically or

psychologically, even if you do it pretty frequently. If you do it instead of your normal daily routine—like if you didn’t go out with friends or go to school just so you could stay home to masturbate—then I’d want you to get it checked out with a counselor or therapist. Otherwise, masturbation can release sexual feelings without risk of STIs or pregnancy, and it teaches you a lot about your own body for when you are older and sexual with another person. Many people masturbate, and many do not. It’s normal if you do, and it’s normal if you don’t.”  
—*Elizabeth Schroeder*

**Q: If a boy [masturbates] a lot, can he use up all of his sperm so that he won’t have enough left to make babies when he’s older?**

**A:** No. “A male’s testicles continuously produce sperm from the time he goes through puberty on [through adulthood]. His body will still be producing [sperm] when he’s older and wants to have children.”  
—*Jennifer Gallo*

## How to Use a Male Condom

*Learn the proper way of putting on a condom with these tips from sexuality educator Jamie Scalfane of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, N.Y.*

- Check the expiration date.
- Check the package for tears or punctures.
- Carefully open the package and push the condom out.
- Figure out which way the condom unrolls.
- Put a small amount of water-based lubricant in the condom tip.
- Hold the tip of the condom.
- If uncircumcised, pull back the foreskin.
- Place the condom over the top of the erect penis.
- Unroll the condom down to the base of the penis.
- Leave about half an inch of room at the tip of the condom for semen.
- Squeeze out any air pockets.
- After ejaculation, hold the rim of the condom at the base of the penis.
- Gently pull the penis out of the other person’s body.
- Roll the condom down off the penis, keeping the liquid inside; don’t just pull it off.
- Tie a knot in it, wrap it in a tissue, and throw it away; do not flush down the toilet!

### Pregnancy

**Q: Can a girl get pregnant if she swallows sperm?**

**A:** “No. [But] a girl can get pregnant if sperm goes anywhere close to the vulva [the external part of the female sex organs].”  
—*Victor Esquivel*

For pregnancy to happen, “sperm needs to meet up [with] and enter a female’s egg. ... Eggs will never be present in a girl’s stomach, so therefore sperm, if swallowed, will not come into contact with an egg.”  
—*Jennifer Gallo*

**Q: Can a woman get pregnant from sex in a hot tub?**

**A:** Yes. “Any time [sperm] enters the vagina, there is a risk of pregnancy.”  
—*Jennifer Fuentesilla*

### Sexual Orientation

**Q: What makes someone gay?**

**A:** “Honestly, no one knows for sure what makes someone heterosexual [straight], lesbian or gay, or bisexual. Most sexuality experts say that it is determined before we are born, as much a part of our biology as our hair or eye color. Some people know from very early on who they are attracted to. For others, it’s less clear. Be who you are, and feel what you feel. When it becomes important to attach a name to those feelings—regardless of what that name is—you’ll know when the time is right.”  
—*Elizabeth Schroeder*

### Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

**Q: What do STDs look like?**

**A:** “Visual STD symptoms can take many shapes and forms, including sores, blisters, warts, bumps, lumps, rashes, redness, and unusual discharge around the genitals, anus, and/or mouth. However, the most common symptom of an STD is actually *no symptom at all*. There is no magic way to tell if a sexual partner has an STD just by looking at [him or her]. The only way to 100 percent protect yourself from STDs is total abstinence (no oral, anal, and/or vaginal sex) or by using a male condom, female condom, or dental dam [latex which can be used for oral sex on a female] consistently and correctly each time you have sex.”  
—*Jamie Scalfane, program director and trainer, “Stay Safe” and “It Takes Two” programs, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, N.Y.*

## Any Further Questions?

When you’re learning about sexual health, getting good answers is important. “Every question should be asked,” says Amy Levine, a sexuality educator based in New York City. “If your source doesn’t know the answer, [he or she] can research the topic and get back to you. Or you can look up the answer together.”



For starters, check out the resources in “By the Book” and “For More Info” on the next page. If your teacher has an anonymous-question box, use it; if not, ask about starting one. (Just remember, your school may have rules about what teachers can and can’t say.) Levine offers tips for asking questions without feeling awkward:

**Power up.** Know that you have a right to this information. “You deserve answers to your questions,” she explains.

**Pick an adult you trust.** This could be a parent or another relative, a teacher, a religious leader, a doctor, or anyone in whom you can confide. “Feel them out” to determine their comfort level, Levine advises. If your source doesn’t have the answer, ask him or her to help you find it.

**Time it well.** “Pick a time when he or she is calm and really has time to listen and respond,” Levine notes. It could be when you’re setting the table for dinner, riding in the car, or hanging out on a weekend afternoon.

**Say how you feel.** Acknowledging embarrassment—yours and your source’s—helps take the edge off for you both. “Try saying, ‘I feel awkward, how does this make you feel?’” suggests Levine.

**Be clear about your needs.** “Whether you need a question answered or just need support, let your source know what you need,” Levine says. Asking specifically for what you want improves your chances of getting it.

**Keep talking.** Look for other opportunities to continue the conversation, such as pointing out sexual situations in television shows you both watch. “The more you talk about it,” observes Levine, “the more it’ll be casual, convenient, and comfortable.”