

COSMOPOLITAN

EXPERTS

sex advice

from Amy Levine, Cosmo's Carnal Counselor

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"Can STDs be transmitted during oral sex?"

Q Can you catch STDs giving or receiving oral sex? I want to use protection when my guy goes down on me, but I don't know what to use.

A Yes, it's possible to transmit STDs from oral action. So, unless you and your boyfriend have been tested and know you're STD-free, experts recommend using a dental dam (a latex or polyurethane sheath placed over your vulva) when you're being pleased and a condom on your guy when he's the recipient.

Both dental dams and condoms help prevent the transmission of bacteria and viruses because they act as a barrier between the genitals and the mouth. Latex is the most effective material, but if you or your guy is allergic, polyurethane is a close second choice. Though dental dams are sold in some drugstores and sex shops, you might have an easier time finding them online at sites like Condomania.com or Goodvibes.com.

That said, let's get real: While using a condom for oral sex is feasible, dental dams can be awkward, impractical and a major mood killer. So, if you really want to play it safe, you and your guy should get tested for STDs. You can check out the [American Social Health Association](http://AmericanSocialHealthAssociation.org) or call the National STD Hotline 24/7 at (800) 342-2437 for more info about transmission, symptoms, testing and treatment.

If, however, you do use a dental dam, go with the nonlubricated, spermicide-free variety and make sure your guy doesn't put his mouth on the side that's touched your genital area. Also, don't forget that you must use a new dam or condom for each act. In other words, if you have intercourse after going down on your guy, for example, replace the condom before he enters you.