

# Determining The Risk: Oral Sex & HIV/STDs

STD	“How easy is it to transmit through oral sex?”	“What can happen to someone with this STD?”	“Can having this STD increase my chances of HIV infection?”	“What should I know if my partner or I am HIV positive?”	“What are my chances of having sex with someone with this STD?”
<h2>HIV/AIDS</h2>	<p><b>Difficult</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although there have been a few documented cases of people getting HIV from sucking and getting sucked, available research suggests that the risk of HIV from any kind of oral sex is <b>very</b> low.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HIV is a life changing disease and there is no cure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While there have been case reports of infection with another strain of HIV (superinfection), it appears to be rare.</li> <li>Animal models suggest that superinfection may be restricted to a short time period after initial infection.</li> <li>It is not known if superinfection is dangerous or what the long-term health consequences may be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is estimated that about 30% –nearly 1/3- of gay men in San Francisco are HIV +.</li> <li>Talk to your partner about HIV status before having sex.</li> </ul>	<p><b>As of May 2005:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one published study has measured the risk of getting HIV from sucking. No HIV infections were found among 239 gay and bisexual men recruited from HIV testing sites who reported only having oral sex in the previous 6 months. In a recent update of this study, researchers reported that among 432 men in the study, there were still no HIV infections.</li> <li>A Spanish study conducted between 1990-2000, looked at 135 sexually active HIV negative male and females who only engaged in oral sex with their HIV positive partners. There were over 19,000 acts of unprotected orogenital sex (fellatio or cunnilingus) and no HIV infections.</li> <li>A study of 102 recently infected gay and bisexual men, found 8 cases of HIV infection they attributed to oral sex. However, only two of these individuals reported no anal sex.</li> </ul> <p><b>Although HIV is in pre-cum and semen, the chance of transmission is much much lower than through unprotected anal intercourse because:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saliva contains enzymes that appear to neutralize the virus.</li> <li>The types of cells that HIV infects are much more common in the lining of the rectum than in the mouth.</li> <li>The lining of the mouth is tougher and more resistant than the lining of the rectum.</li> </ul> <p><b>The following may increase your risk of HIV infection and/or transmission:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sores, cuts, and gum disease may make it easier for HIV to enter the body.</li> <li>White blood cells at the site of an STD infection may provide an easy entry point for HIV.</li> </ul>
<h2>Herpes</h2> <p>Oral herpes or cold sores are usually caused by the HSV type 1 (HSV-1) and genital herpes by HSV type II (HSV-II) However, HSV-1 can cause genital herpes</p>	<p><b>Easy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sores and blisters (usually on the lips, genitals, or anus) are <b>extremely infectious</b>.</li> <li>Easily passed by sucking/getting sucked, rimming, and licking/being licked.</li> <li>In many cases the herpes virus can be passed when no symptoms are present.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blisters/sores can be extremely painful.</li> <li>Individuals with herpes usually have periodic outbreaks throughout their lives.</li> <li>Treatment can reduce the severity and the duration of herpes outbreaks <b>but is not a cure</b>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research suggests that having HSV-II can more than double your risk for HIV infection.</li> <li>The risk of HIV infection is greater for those with new HSV-II infections compared to those with long-standing HSV-II.</li> <li>Sores or lesions provide easy entry and exit for HIV.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outbreaks occur more often, are more severe, and may take longer to heal.</li> <li>Outbreaks increase the frequency and amount of HIV you shed and may make it easier to transmit HIV.</li> <li>Studies among heterosexuals in Africa suggest that the risk of getting HSV-II from sex is about four times greater for HIV positive than HIV negative individuals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>High</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nearly 7 out of every 10 Americans have oral herpes (HSV-I) often acquired non-sexually during childhood.</li> <li>It is estimated that 30-50% of HIV negative MSM and up to 80% of HIV+ MSM have HSV-II.</li> </ul>
<h2>Syphilis</h2>	<p><b>Very Easy</b> if sores or mucus patches are present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily passed through all types of oral sex from contact with open sores (commonly called chancres) on the penis, anus, or mouth.</li> <li>Also passed through contact with mucus patches in the mouth.</li> <li><b>Sexually active gay men should get tested for syphilis at least every three months.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sores &amp; rashes of syphilis infection are painless and usually go away.</li> <li>Can be cured with antibiotics.</li> <li><b>Left untreated</b> syphilis can eventually cause brain damage, heart disease, blindness and death.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open syphilis sores or chancres provide an easy entry and exit for HIV.</li> <li>White blood cells at the site of infection may increase the chances of HIV infection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progression from primary to secondary to tertiary syphilis may be accelerated in individuals with HIV.</li> <li>Treatment may be different for HIV positive individuals.</li> <li>Syphilis can increase your viral load, as well as decrease your CD-4 or T-cell count.</li> <li>It is recommended that syphilis testing be included as part of your routine HIV blood work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium But Increasing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since 1998, syphilis cases in San Francisco have increased over 400% – from 41 in 1998 to 522 in 2003.</li> <li>In 2004, over 95% were among gay and bisexual males– of whom, 60% were HIV positive.</li> </ul>
<h2>Gonorrhea</h2>	<p><b>Moderately Easy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When passed through oral sex, gonorrhea is usually passed from the penis into the throat while sucking cock.</li> <li>It can also be passed from an infected throat to a penis while getting sucked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gonorrhea can cause burning with urination and/or discharge from the penis.</li> <li>Can cause a sore throat.</li> <li>Some people have no symptoms at all.</li> <li>Can be cured with antibiotics.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased white blood cells and inflammation at the site of infection may make it easier for HIV to enter the body.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It does not appear that HIV infection affects symptoms or treatment of gonorrhea.</li> <li>Gonorrhea appears to increase the amount of HIV in semen and may make it easier to transmit HIV.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium/Low</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2003, over a third of all gonorrhea cases among MSM seen at SF City Clinic were pharyngeal (in the throat).</li> </ul>

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<b>NGU</b> (Non gonococcal urethritis)	<b>Probably Easy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No studies have been done measuring the risk of oral transmission. However, doctors at SF City Clinic frequently treat cases of orally transmitted NGU.</li> <li>NGU can be passed from both sucking and getting sucked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NGU can cause burning when urinating and/or discharge from the penis.</li> <li>NGU of the throat can cause a sore throat.</li> <li>Can be cured with antibiotics.</li> </ul>	<b>Likely</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased white blood cells and inflammation at the site of infection may make it easier for HIV to enter the body.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It does not appear that HIV infection affects symptoms or treatment of NGU.</li> <li>NGU may increase viral load in semen making it easier to transmit HIV.</li> </ul>	<b>Low</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although low, like most STDs among gay men in San Francisco, the numbers have been increasing since 1998.</li> </ul>
<b>Chlamydia</b>	<b>Unknown But Possible</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No reliable studies have been done that measure the risk of oral transmission.</li> <li>Chlamydia can be found in the throat.</li> <li>It is becoming more common among gay men.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chlamydia can cause burning with urination and/or discharge from the penis.</li> <li>Can be cured with antibiotics.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased white blood cells and inflammation at the site of infection may make it easier for HIV to enter the body.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It does not appear that HIV infection affects symptoms or treatment of chlamydia.</li> <li>Chlamydia appears to increase the amount of HIV in semen making it easier to transmit HIV.</li> </ul>	<b>Low/Medium But Increasing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 4% or 1 in 25 men who have sex with men seen at SF City Clinic are infected.</li> </ul>
<b>Genital Warts</b> (Human Papilloma Virus)	<b>Unknown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not known how easy it is to transmit the genital wart virus through oral sex.</li> <li>Can be passed by <b>all types</b> of oral sex.</li> <li>Warts usually appear on the penis or in the anus but may also occur in or around the mouth or lips.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread through skin-to-skin contact or contact with warts.</li> <li>Different treatments are available but the virus stays in the body.</li> <li>While most strains of HPV only cause warts, some strains cause anal cancer.</li> <li>Although not an issue for oral sex, if you have anal sex talk to your doctor about regular anal pap smears.</li> </ul>	<b>Unknown for Oral Sex</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies have shown an increased rate of HIV infection for people with anal or genital warts who have unprotected anal sex.</li> <li>Warts <b>may</b> provide an easy entry point for HIV to enter the body.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Genital warts may be more common and harder to treat.</li> <li>Studies have found that HPV is more common among HIV positive individuals than HIV negative individuals.</li> <li>With decreased T-cells, shedding of HPV appears to increase thus making it more infectious.</li> <li>Anal cancer is 7 times more common among HIV+ than HIV negative MSM. <b>Get checked regularly if you have had anal warts.</b></li> </ul>	<b>High</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Genital warts are one of the most common STDs.</li> <li>Check for wart-like growths on the penis, anus, or lips of a sex partner. <b>NOTE:</b> Genital warts are sometimes too small to be seen.</li> </ul>
<b>Intestinal Parasites</b> (Cryptosporidium, Amoeba, Giardia, etc.)	<b>Easy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intestinal parasites are easily passed through rimming.</li> <li>Sucking and getting sucked are low risk unless you swallow fecal matter (shit) when sucking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps, bloating, increased gas, and nausea.</li> <li>Most intestinal diseases can be cured with medication.</li> </ul>		<b>Unknown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you have a weakened immune system, symptoms may be more severe and parasites may be more difficult to cure.</li> </ul>	<b>Low</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2004, rates for these diseases were low.</li> <li>Most cases in San Francisco occur among men who have sex with men.</li> </ul>
<b>Hepatitis A</b>	<b>Very Easy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hepatitis A is very easily passed through rimming.</li> <li>Sucking is low risk unless you swallow fecal matter (shit) when sucking.</li> <li><b>Get vaccinated.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hepatitis A can cause weakness, dark urine, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), and enlarged liver.</li> <li>Symptoms of Hepatitis A usually go away after several weeks.</li> </ul>	<b>Unknown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It does not appear that HIV infection affects transmission or symptoms of Hepatitis A.</li> <li>Some HIV drugs have toxic side effects that are harmful to the liver. Any disease like hepatitis that affects the liver may increase risk of liver damage.</li> </ul>	<b>Moderately Low</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>However, rates of Hepatitis A have been increasing in San Francisco and most cases in San Francisco occur among men who have sex with men.</li> </ul>
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	<b>Probably Difficult</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No studies have measured the risk of transmission from oral sex.</li> <li>Transmitted primarily through unprotected anal sex.</li> <li><b>Get vaccinated.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hepatitis B can cause weakness, dark urine, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), and enlarged liver.</li> <li>10% of adults infected with Hepatitis B become carriers of the virus. Long-term effects can include scarring and cancer of the liver.</li> </ul>	<b>Unknown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It does not appear that HIV infection affects transmission or symptoms of Hepatitis B.</li> <li>Symptoms can be different for HIV positive individuals.</li> <li>Some HIV drugs have toxic side effects that are harmful to the liver. Any disease like hepatitis that affects the liver may increase risk of liver damage.</li> </ul>	<b>Probably Low</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of cases of Hepatitis B among gay men has decreased significantly since 1985 due to the adoption of safer sex practices for anal sex and vaccination.</li> </ul>