



Vaginal Sex

What is vaginal sex?

Vaginal sex (intercourse) is the penetration of the vagina by a penis. This is what a lot of people think of when they refer to 'sex'. This is the only sex that can cause a woman to get pregnant. Vaginal sex can also be vaginal penetration with a finger or sex toy. Vaginal sex is done between a male and female partner, or between two girls or women who can use toys or fingers to have vaginal sex.

How risky is vaginal sex?

Penile-Vaginal sex without a barrier is considered a high-risk behaviour for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) for both men and women. Women are considered at higher risk of getting HIV and STIs than males during unprotected Penile-vaginal sex due to the greater exposed surface area, the greater opportunity for trauma in the vaginal tissue, and the high rates of absorption in the mucosal lining of the vagina. Transmission of HIV or STIs to the male partner during unprotected vaginal sex occurs through the mucosal lining of the urethra (opening at the tip of the penis) or of the foreskin and due to cuts or tears on the penis. Having vaginal sex, even without ejaculation can put a person at risk for STIs.

Unprotected penile-vaginal sex is also high risk for pregnancy. A reliable method of birth control is important if you decide to choose to have penile-vaginal sex.

How can I make vaginal sex safer?

There are a number of things you can do to reduce the risk of HIV and STIs during vaginal sex:

- Use a reliable form of birth control.
- Use male or female condoms (latex or polyurethane).
- Use lubrication. Water-based lubricant will reduce the risk of condom breakage and tears of the vagina.
- Try other vaginal sex activities that are less risky:
 - Mutual masturbation
 - Oral sex with a barrier
 - Use clean unshared sex toys. Use condoms over sex toys if you are sharing them or moving from vagina to anus. Sex toys should be cleaned after each use.

What if I have had unprotected vaginal sex?

If you have had vaginal intercourse without a condom you should consider getting tested for HIV and other STIs. You also might want to consider accessing Emergency Contraception if you are not using reliable birth control. Talk to your partner about safer sex, use a barrier and birth control.

Remember...

Vaginal intercourse is a high-risk activity. If you are engaging in vaginal sex it is essential that you use condoms, birth control, safer sex /dental dams and have STI testing.