

SEXtalk)))

Answers to Your Questions about Sex and Relationships

Have a ??? Email sextalk@u.arizona.edu

factoid

**Diet can help reduce PMS symptoms --
Stick with foods high in complex carbohydrates, moderate in protein, and low in refined sugar and salt, and drinks that are non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic.**

**Q. Is it okay to have sex with a girl when she's having her period?
Does it increase the chance of me getting an STD or AIDS?**

A. From a medical standpoint, if you and your partner are both free of HIV and viral hepatitis there is no health-related reason to avoid sex during menstruation (except in cases where a woman suffers from excessive bleeding or other menstrual problems). In fact, some women claim that sex just prior to or during menstruation can actually help to alleviate and shorten the duration of menstrual cramps. On the other hand, uncomfortable physical symptoms such as bloating, cramping, and breast tenderness may lead some women to experience reduced sexual desire or enjoyment during menstruation.

For couples who do have sex during a woman's period, here are some things to keep in mind:

- menstruation may change a woman's natural vaginal lubrication making it necessary to use a lubricant during intercourse,
- some men experience skin irritation when their penis comes into contact with menstrual fluid -- condoms can be used to avoid contact,
- women can use a diaphragm or cervical cap to obstruct menstrual flow during intercourse.

If an individual is infected with HIV or hepatitis B, intercourse during menstruation may heighten the likelihood of disease transmission since both of these viruses are spread through contact with infected blood. Risk of infection during menstruation is actually greater for women because the cervix is more open than usual. Correct and consistent condom use is effective for preventing transmission of HIV and hepatitis B. To ensure safety, if either partner is uncertain about their health status, they should make an appointment to be tested. HIV and hepatitis testing can both be done at the Campus Health Service. Call 621-6490 to make an appointment.

Reference: Our Sexuality, 6th edition. Crooks & Baur (1996)

Sex Talk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., C.H.E.S. & Melissa McGee, Ph.D., M.P.H., health educators at the University of Arizona Campus Health Service. Send your questions to "Sex Talk" c/o Health Promotion & Preventive Services, 200 W. Old Main or E-mail to sextalk@u.arizona.edu. "Sex Talk" appears every Monday. Paid by Campus Health Services.