

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

We asked students what types of sex they have had. Results: Anal sex = 17%, oral sex = 66% and vaginal sex = 64%. (2006 Health and Wellness Survey, n= 3102)

Q. My boyfriend and I have been curious about anal sex. Although we have not tried it yet, a few things worry me: it has been painful for me in the past and I worry that he will be repulsed when he realizes that it is not the “cleanest” form of intimacy. Can you suggest a way to make it a cleaner, more enjoyable activity for the both of us?

A. The anus is not very “elastic”, so it can feel pleasantly “tight” to a male partner. While tightness may feel good to him, it can cause some discomfort for you. Using lots of lube should decrease friction and pain for you, the receptive partner.

What makes anal sex less “clean” is the fact that the anus contains small amounts of fecal material and bacteria, even if the receptive partner has recently emptied their bowel with an enema or a bowel movement. Anal contents are normal and harmless in the anus, but can cause infections in other body areas. Therefore, it’s important to avoid even small amounts of fecal material near the mouth, vagina, or urethral opening. After anal sex, the penetrating partner should wash his penis with soap and water before having oral or vaginal sex. Before your boyfriend tries the “backdoor” approach he might feel more comfortable if you both enjoy a soapy shower together.

Because the lining of the anus is very thin, it may tear and bleed. This is one of the reasons anal sex is considered a very high-risk sexual activity and can greatly increase the chances of transmitting HIV, hepatitis and other STDs. Wearing a condom and using plenty of water-based lube will reduce, but not eliminate, those risks.

For more information about sexual health, click on the Campus Health Service web page at www.health.arizona.edu.

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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