

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

STD Awareness Day 4/21 – free condoms and prizes, 10am-1pm, UA Mall. GYT – “Get Yourself Tested.”

Q Is there a “safe time” to have sex?

A. Although there could be a few interpretations to your question, it sounds like you are wondering when sex is least likely to result in pregnancy. The short answer is to keep sex as far away from ovulation, the time in a woman's menstrual cycle when she releases an egg, as possible. In this case, a woman with an average 28-day menstrual cycle will be fertile around the time of ovulation on or near Day 14, when Day 1 represents the start of her period. Since sperm can survive in a woman's body for up to 5 days but an egg is only viable for 24-36 hours, pregnancy could take place five days prior to ovulation and up to one and a half days after.

That works well in theory, but in the real world very few women have menstrual cycles that regularly follow that exact pattern. Cycles may be between 21 and 35 days and can change over time. All of these factors make it difficult to say without question when a woman will ovulate, which makes it hard to say when that “safe time”

might be. Fortunately, we live in an age where we have plenty of birth control options that put the “safe time” to have sex within our control. Oral contraception (The Pill), condoms, intrauterine devices (IUDs), the patch (Ortho Evra), the shot (Depo Provera) or the vaginal ring (Nuva Ring) are all highly effective methods to consider with your health care provider.

Last but not least, a “safe time” to have sex should also be one where you are taking steps to avoid and prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). While talking about STDs is never easy, being open with your partner before sex can save you undue stress and suffering down the road. Check out MTV's “GYT” (Get Yourself Tested) website at www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt on how to get the conversation started. For more information on birth control check out www.health.arizona.edu or find the method that is right for you at www.arhp.org/MethodMatch.



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

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