

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

## factoid

**Gardasil®**, the HPV vaccine, can help prevent genital warts in a woman even if she has already been diagnosed with HPV on her cervix (through a pap test).

## Q. How long does sperm survive once it has touched a surface?

**A.** The life expectancy of sperm (one component of semen, which is comprised of fluids from the prostate, Cowper's gland, and seminal vesicles) depends on the environment where the sperm is deposited after ejaculation. Sperm usually survive three to five days when ejaculated into a woman's vagina where the cervical mucus helps sustain sperm searching for an egg to fertilize. Sperm ejaculated outside the body (and onto inanimate objects like sheets, toilet seats, denim jeans, etc.) usually live only a few hours.

## Q. How many inches can a penis go in?

**A.** Well... now... that depends on what it's going into. Is it going into a mouth, a vagina, an anus or something else? For most openings into the human body (vagina, anus, mouth) a penis, unless it is unusually big, will go in as far as the erect penis is long (about 4-7 inches from base to tip). Interestingly, the average vagina is also about 4-7 inches long.

The vagina, when aroused, experiences increased blood flow, causing it to lengthen and the cervix of the uterus to ascend. Therefore, during vaginal intercourse, the typical vagina can accommodate the length of the typical penis.

When a penis is inserted into a partner's anus, extra care must be taken to minimize tearing of the lining of the anus (where tissues are more fragile than the rugged, elastic vagina). Lubricants are recommended to reduce friction and pain. Because anal sex is a high risk sexual behavior for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, consistent and correct condom use is essential for risk reduction.

During oral sex, the depth of penile penetration should be controlled by the comfort level of the person whose mouth is involved. Some oral cavities are not going to be large enough to easily accommodate a large penis. Communication is key, whether a penis is going into a vagina, anus, or mouth.



Have a question? Send it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)

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