

It's super common to wonder how you know if you're ready to have first-time sex. "Part of growing up is becoming sexually active, but it should be when you feel ready and no-one is pressuring [you] physically or emotionally," says Dr Nancy Armstrong, co-author of *100 Questions You'd Never Ask Your Parents*. Some of Dr Armstrong's patients start having sex in their teens, while others wait until they're older – it's all normal. That said, you should bear in mind age of consent laws – see page 78 for details.

CAN PEOPLE TELL I'M A VIRGIN?

Rest assured it's 100 per cent false that someone can look at you and tell if you're a virgin. Your partner and even your doctor can't tell. "People think you can tell if someone is a virgin by inspecting their genitalia. Absolutely not true," Dr Armstrong says.

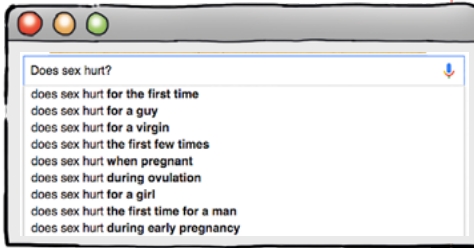
AM I STILL A VIRGIN IF I HAVE ORAL SEX?

What 'counts' when it comes to losing your virginity? Are you still a virgin if you've only had oral sex? What about lesbians, are they all virgins? Dr Armstrong says, medically speaking, virginity refers to penis in vagina sex – oral sex isn't a factor. However, she stresses the definition of virginity is a personal thing. "It's a concept that gets a lot of attention, but is pretty meaningless," she says.

Your MOST GOOGLED sex QUESTIONS

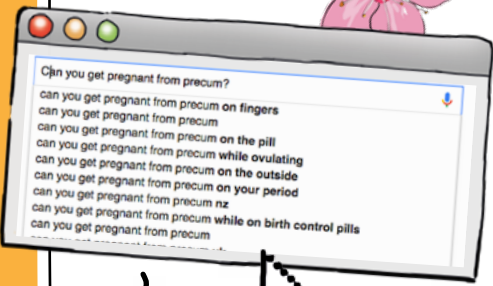
—ANSWERED

The internet isn't always reliable. Here's the truth about everything you wanted to know about sex, but were too shy to ask out loud.



Once you've decided you're ready to have sex, a whole bunch of other questions arise – including if there will be pain. "Sex shouldn't hurt," Dr Armstrong says. While she says there can be some discomfort, the most important thing to make sure it feels good is to be properly lubricated. If you're truly turned on and relaxed your body will take care of this, but there's nothing wrong with using extra lubrication as well. If you're worried about bleeding, it's not as common as you might think. "Sometimes there's a little, but most women don't bleed their first time," Dr Armstrong says.

"The condom should really be on before there is any kind of sexual contact, because many times the male will have some fluid that escapes the penis before ejaculation and it has sperm in it," Dr Armstrong explains. "And sperm anywhere in the vicinity of the vagina can cause pregnancy or STIs." Yep, you heard that right – you can get pregnant from pre-cum. But there's another reason why you're constantly told in health class how important it is to use a condom, even if you're on birth control. "You can have sex once and get a sexually transmitted infection from someone who is infected," Dr Armstrong says. Take-home message: the condom should be on before there's any genital-to-genital contact.



“SOME PEOPLE THINK THEY CAN'T GET PREGNANT UNLESS THEY ORGASM”

CAN YOU USE A CONDOM TWICE?
 No, you definitely can't use a condom twice. Make sure you always grab a fresh one each and every time you're about to have sex. Also, some people think using more than one condom at the same time makes you safer, this is 100 per cent not true. The friction of them rubbing together actually makes them far less effective.

CAN YOU GET PREGNANT ON YOUR PERIOD?
 "If the penis is in the vagina, you can get pregnant," Dr Armstrong says. Which means it's definitely possible to get pregnant if you're having sex while you're on your period (or if you're having sex in water, another myth people believe is a way to avoid pregnancy). "A lot of women have a little bleeding mid-cycle, and that's actually when you're most fertile," Dr Armstrong explains. "Some people think they can't get pregnant unless they orgasm, that's absolutely not true." It's better to not risk it and always use a condom, which will also protect you from STIs.

CAN SEX CAUSE A UTI?
 If you've had sex and are experiencing a burning sensation when you pee, you could have a urinary tract infection (UTI). This isn't a sexually transmitted infection, but can still be caused by sex. A UTI occurs when bacteria makes its way into your bladder. "When the penis is thrusting into the vagina, bacteria can be massaged into the urethra (the tube that allows urine to pass out of the body), which is right above the vagina," Dr Armstrong says. If you feel like you have to pee every five minutes but when you do, you only pass small amounts of urine, you most likely have a UTI. To treat it, you have to see your doctor for medication to get rid of the bacteria.



While anytime the penis is in the vagina there's a chance that you could become pregnant, it's impossible to get pregnant through oral sex alone. However, you can most definitely still contract an STI through oral sex, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, and even HIV.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A STI?
 Sexually transmitted infections have symptoms, but some don't. "Some people only find out they have an STI when they come in for a checkup," Dr Armstrong says, adding that a handful STIs (like chlamydia) don't have any symptoms, but can still be harmful in that they could make it hard for you to have children one day.

WORDS BY ILLA LARSEN PHOTOGRAPHY BY GETTY IMAGES

