

Oral Sex: Enhancement Suggestions for Men and Women

By Michael Castleman

Oral sex is ubiquitous in pornography—especially fellatio. Porn actors—both men and women—can’t get enough of giving head, and receiving it. As a result, pornography has introduced many people to oral sex, shown them the basics of performing it, and helped make oral sex not only culturally acceptable, but also something many people *assume* is a routine element in partner sex.

But it isn’t. According to the landmark “Sex in America” survey (1999), about three-quarters of American lovers have provided and received oral caresses at some point in life. But only about one-quarter said they played orally the last time they had sex before being surveyed. A similar survey by University of California researchers shows that only about half of respondents recalled giving or receiving oral sex during the 12 months before they were surveyed. Other surveys show that socioeconomic status predicts willingness to engage in oral sex. As education and income increase, so does comfort with oral sex.

In sex, no one should feel obligated or pressured to do anything they don’t want to do. If you’d rather not give or receive oral, you don’t have to. This may cause relationship conflict, but no one should feel coerced into oral play.

On the other hand, some people feel uncomfortable about oral sex, or avoid it, not because they find it objectionable, but rather because they’re uncertain if they’re doing it properly. Here are some suggestions:

Cunnilingus: When Women Receive Oral

“Cunnilingus,” comes from the Latin *cunnus* for vulva, women’s external genitals, and *lingere*, to lick. Licking a woman’s vulva is a lot like kissing her lips: The basics are pretty simple, but there are countless creative variations that keep it interesting, fresh, passionate, and fun. “Cunnilingus is among the most intimate sexual experiences two people can enjoy together,” says Fair Oaks, California, sex therapist Louanne Weston, Ph.D. “For some women, it’s the source of their most

intense orgasms. For others, it's embarrassing. Men feel similarly. Some love providing it, while others feel reluctant or refuse."

The myth is that men just want to be sucked and don't enjoy going down on women. In fact, many men love to provide oral. It's much more likely than intercourse to bring women to orgasm. For many men, providing enjoyable cunnilingus is proof that they're good lovers.

Hygiene Issues

Some women feel reluctant to receive oral sex because they are convinced their genitals are unattractive or malodorous. For women who deal with used tampons and vaginal infections, that part of the body may not seem like the most attractive place. It only takes one joke about "smelly pussy" to make women so self-conscious that they don't want oral.

Anxiety about the taste and smell of their genitals accounts for the fact that American women spend \$150 million a year on douches. According to leading gynecologists, women should *not* douche. It's hygienically unnecessary, and has been linked to an increased risk of many health problems, some of them serious, for example, pelvic inflammatory disease.

The fragrance and taste of the vulva and vagina depend on several factors: personal hygiene, genital health, the menstrual cycle if the woman is premenopausal, and the extent of vaginal lubrication loss and atrophy if she is postmenopausal. Normal washing with soap and water keeps the vulva and vagina clean, and tasting rather like the mouth does in deep kissing, except that oral sex includes the flavor and fragrance of the woman's sexual arousal, which many men find delicious.

Some men and women feel concerned about oral sex during a woman's menstrual period. Discuss this. Menstrual flow does not come in contact with the vulva or clitoris, so the man's tongue does not come in contact with it either. Women may also insert a tampon or diaphragm to catch the flow. However, menstruation may change the aroma and taste between a woman's legs. If either partner would rather not enjoy cunnilingus during the woman's period, the couple can take a few days off.

Menopausal changes may also affect vaginal fragrance and taste. As vaginal lubrication subsides, normal vaginal microorganisms may not be flushed out. In addition, one of the lesser known changes of menopause is vaginal atrophy,

thinning of the vaginal membrane. In most women, regular washing and use of a vaginal lubricant eliminates any problem.

However, if a woman feels self-conscious, try a flavored lubricant. And if a man has any objections, he can suck on a mint lifesaver while providing oral caresses. But in the vast majority of women of any age, the vulva smells and tastes fine—and men are happy—eager—to provide oral caresses.

“If a woman thinks her genitals are look, smell, or taste unattractive,” says Palo Alto, California, sex therapist Marty Klein, Ph.D., “it’s highly unlikely that any man will be able to persuade her otherwise. But a man can certainly say: ‘I love how you taste.’ ‘I love to eat you.’”

The Basics For Men

Women’s external genitals include the fleshy outer vaginal lips, the thinner pink inner lips, the clitoris nestled under the clitoral hood at the upper junction of the vaginal lips, the vaginal opening, and the erotically sensitive urethral sponge between the clitoris and vagina. Basic cunnilingus involves licking the vulva from the vaginal opening to the clitoris. As women become sexually aroused, their outer vaginal lips fill with extra blood, which parts them somewhat, exposing the inner lips and the sensitive tissue between them.

The tongue is much softer than fingers, so it can provide the gentlest possible stimulation of the clitoris and vulva. “For many women,” Weston explains, “the gentleness of oral sex is what makes it so enjoyable.”

Tell a new lover that you’d like to go down on her. Either say something, or kiss her on the way down—her neck, the tops of her breasts, her nipples, her belly, so she gets the idea where you’re headed. You might check in saying, “I’d like to keep going down. Is that okay?” Move down slowly. Make sure she’s in a comfortable position. Lying on the bed on your stomach between the woman’s legs might strain your neck. You might slip a pillow under the woman’s hips to raise her a bit. Or you might coax her butt to the side of the bed and kneel on the floor to lick her.

Don’t dive into cunnilingus all at once. Begin slowly—and very gently. Start by nuzzling, kissing, and licking her inner thighs and the area around her vulva. Anticipation of cunnilingus can feel very arousing to women. As you move toward her genitals, begin by licking the fleshy outer lips. Run your tongue up and down them. Nibble them gently with your lips. Next, work your tongue in between the

outer lips to caress the smaller, thinner inner lips. Then circle the vaginal opening and perhaps insert your tongue—or a finger or two—inside her vagina.

Lick very gently. In porn, the men don't do this. They go at the vulva like a dog dying of thirst. As a result, some men infer that intense, rapid-fire tongue play is the way to go. Check in with the woman. Ask if she prefers gentle licking or if she's like more intensity. Many women prefer very gently oral caresses at first, and then some more intensity as they become highly aroused and approach orgasm. Check in often until you're confident that you know her preferences. Then check in periodically after that. Preferences change, or she may just be in the mood for something a little different.

Approach the clitoris very slowly and gently. Some women enjoy a man's tongue directly on the clitoris. Others find direct clitoral licking too intense, even uncomfortable. They prefer it when the tongue only lightly caresses the clitoris or circles it, which stimulates it but less directly.

Some women feel reluctant to discuss their reactions to oral sex. Instead they use "body language." They might squirm if they find a certain lick uncomfortable. Unfortunately, it's very easy for a man to misinterpret body language and think that when she's writhing in discomfort, she's actually in the throes of delight. That's why it's important to check in verbally: "Is this okay?" "Is this too intense?"

The Fine Points

- Alternate using the tip of your tongue, the flat of it, and your lips as you move around her vulva. All three feel a little different and provide subtly different sensations.
- Combine licking with finger and palm massage. After circling her vulva with your tongue, do the same with a finger or two, using light, moderate, or deep pressure, as the woman prefers. Use your fingers to gently part her vaginal lips. Massage her inner thighs. Finger around her anus as you provide oral caresses, or gently insert a well-lubricated finger. (Nothing that touches the anal area should touch the vagina or vulva. If it does, the woman may develop a urinary tract infection.)
- Combine oral sex with massage of other parts of her body. Some women enjoy having their breasts caressed while receiving oral. Others enjoy whole

body massage. Try slipping a finger or two into her mouth so she can suck them while you're licking her. Or combine oral sex with any sex toy(s) the woman enjoys.

- Some women who prefer very light licking of the clitoris early in oral sex, need more intensity later on to run up to orgasm. Keep checking in.
- Try what's variously known as the "little lick trick," "quicky lick," or "snaky lick." Instead of steady tongue pressure on the clitoris or swirling moves around it, you use the tip of your tongue to tease just the underside of the clitoral shaft with light little licks about once every 10 to 15 seconds. This move helps some women who feel highly aroused get over the hump and express orgasm.
- Some women like having their anuses licked (rimming). As long as it's clean, there's nothing "dirty" about licking that opening as part of oral sex. To ease hygienic concerns, wash or shower together beforehand. Beyond resolving the anal hygiene issue, bathing together is a marvelous sensual appetizer before lovemaking.
- Beyond the various cunnilingus techniques, something else affects many women's enjoyment of oral sex—her lover's enthusiasm about providing it. "Few things detract from a woman's enjoyment of oral sex," Weston explains, "as much as the suspicion that her lover considers it a duty or, worse, a chore." If you enjoy providing cunnilingus, by all means, say so.

Female Ejaculation

Some women produce fluid on orgasm. If they ejaculate during oral sex, many women feel concerned about "squirting" in their lover's face. This is also an issue for many men. Another issue is the possibility of the lover ingesting some of this fluid. Discuss your feelings about this. There's no right or wrong, just personal preferences. Many men enjoy being very close to the vulva as the woman ejaculates, and have no problem ingesting some of the fluid. It's safe to ingest. Female ejaculate is not urine, though it may contain some dilute urine. It appears to be chemically closer to prostate fluid, so ingesting it is not all that different from a woman swallowing a man's semen.

After orgasm, many women experience unusual clitoral sensitivity and don't like to be touched or licked there. This is normal. If you like "last licks" after she comes,

check in about where and when she might like to be licked. If not her clitoris, perhaps her vaginal lips or vaginal opening. Or come up from between her legs and hold her, kiss her, and massage her any way she likes.

Fellatio: When Men Receive Oral

“Fellatio,” comes from the Latin, *fellare*, to suck. “Fellatio can be profoundly symbolic,” Klein explains, “For many men, it’s the ultimate in sexual acceptance from a lover. Even when it isn’t, fellatio is an opportunity for the man to lie back and just receive pleasure, which is something many men find very arousing. Fellatio is very wet, which increases the penis’ sensitivity. And most women can be more varied and creative with their lips and tongues than with their vaginas.”

Some women don’t enjoy providing oral caresses, but many do. “Lots of women derive pleasure from feeling a firm erection in their mouths,” Weston explains. “But few women relish what you often see in pornography—having their heads held firmly while their lovers push erections deep down their throats. That makes most women gag and feel used. But with the man on his back and the woman above him, she has a great deal of control and can be as playful and creative as she likes. Many women enjoy that—as well as seeing how much their lovers enjoy fellatio.”

Just like women, many men feel self-conscious about their genitals. Most men are convinced that their penises are “too small,” even though the overwhelming majority are normal-size. And if a man is among the one in 200 men who have hypospadias, a usually-minor birth defects in which the urethral opening is located not dead-center at the tip of the penis, but rather toward the underside of the penis, he may feel reluctant to have a lover’s eyes get close enough to notice.

Meanwhile many women feel reluctant—or unable—to provide oral sex. Some worry that he might accidentally urinate during fellatio. This can’t happen. A valve in the penis allows urine—but not semen—to flow when the penis is flaccid, and semen—but not urine—to flow when it’s erect. Some women feel repulsed by having semen squirted into their mouths. Others rebel against the idea of swallowing it. If a woman is adamantly opposed to providing fellatio, her feelings should be respected. No one should ever feel badgered or pressured into doing anything sexually they don’t want to do.

Hygiene Issues

Every man should wash his penis and scrotum with soap and water whenever he bathes or showers. Men who are not circumcised should retract the foreskin and wash its inner skin. If a man neglects this, dirt and bacteria build up that may make the penis smell and taste foul—and increase risk of transmitting sexual infections.

The Basics for Women

Fellatio is as simple as eating a banana—without using your teeth. Start by kissing the head of his penis. Next lightly part your lips and lick the head and the corona, the little ridge around the base of the head. Then take the head into your mouth, using your lips and tongue to caress it and the corona—particularly the frenulum, the part of the corona on the underside of the head. Eventually, move your head up and down so that your lips caress as much of the shaft as you can comfortably take in your mouth. However, the shaft is considerably less sensitive than the head, corona, and frenulum, so return frequently to these sensitive places—unless the man asks for something different.

The Fine Points

- Alternate sucking with licking the head and shaft.
- Flick your tongue rapidly around the head.
- Lick or nibble the scrotum.
- Stroke the shaft with one or both hands while sucking or licking the head.
- Cup and fondle the scrotum while sucking.
- Alternate sucking with gently squeezing the head or shaft between your thumb and forefinger.
- Gently slap his erection against your lips or outstretched tongue.
- Try the “little lick trick,” discussed in the section on cunnilingus. Lightly lick the underside of the head of the penis once every 10 to 15 seconds.

- While sucking, massage him elsewhere. Some men enjoy massage of the anus during fellatio. Others like being anally fingered—use plenty of lubricant, and trim that finger’s nail.
- Some men enjoy rimming. As long as the man’s anus is clean, there’s nothing “dirty” about licking it. Bathing or showering together beforehand resolves hygiene concerns and can be a sensual appetizer to lovemaking.
- Finally, if providing fellatio gives you pleasure, say so. Most men get turned on knowing that their lovers enjoy providing oral caresses.

Men should feel free to direct women’s oral explorations in ways that heighten their arousal. But gentle requests are usually more welcome than terse commands. No one likes to feel ordered around. “Remember, this is a gift of pleasure you’re receiving,” Weston explains, “not something you are demanding of a slave.”

About using teeth during fellatio: Many men prefer lips and tongue only, no teeth. However, the erect penis is a tough little organ, so light nibbling with teeth along the shaft are unlikely to cause harm. Ask if the man is open to this. If so, keep it gentle, and check in: “Is this okay?” Adjust your moves according to his reactions.

Deep Throating and Gagging

The 1972 pornographic film, *Deep Throat*, invented a character whose clitoris was supposedly located in her throat. In order to have orgasms, she had to take men’s erections deep down there. *Deep Throat* became the first—and virtually only—X-rated movie to break out of the porn ghetto and play to mainstream audiences. It grossed \$600 million. Since then, many men have wanted to push their erections down their lovers’ throats, and many women have been interested in providing this variation on fellatio. The problem is that deep throating—and even a good deal of ordinary fellatio—triggers gagging.

Stick anything too far down the throat, and the body gags. It’s a defensive reflex that helps prevent choking. In addition, some women have “short palates.” They gag very easily, which can make them afraid to take a penis into their mouths at all. There are several ways to deal with this:

- Gagging is to some extent triggered by anxiety. A woman is much more likely to gag when the man pushes his penis down her throat than when he remains still and she’s in control of how deep it goes. If a man want his lover

to take him more deeply, he should stay still and let her accept his penis into her mouth in the way and at the speed that's most comfortable for her. When the woman is in control, she's less likely to gag.

- It's possible for women to take some conscious control of their gag reflex so they don't gag so quickly. To desensitize the gag reflex, start in a nonsexual situation, for example, while brushing your teeth. Dentists recommend brushing the back of the tongue to prevent bad breath. Practice introducing your toothbrush into the back of your mouth. Play with brushing the back of your tongue. Breathe deeply and visualize yourself not gagging. Discover the point at which you gag. Over a few weeks, as you continue to experiment with your gag reaction, you should notice that you don't gag quite as easily.
- For women who gag easily, another option is mock-deep-throating: Rub your hands together vigorously to warm them. Apply some lubricant to one hand. Take as much of his penis into your mouth as you can comfortably accommodate, then use your warm, well lubricated hand to stroke the rest of his shaft. "This comes very close to the sensation of being deep-throated," Weston explains.

Ejaculation Into Her Mouth?

Another potentially dicey fellatio issue involves ejaculation into the woman's mouth. Many women are happy to accept semen in their mouths, and have no problem with the taste of semen or swallowing it. Others can't stand the idea. There are several reasons why women might not want men to ejaculate into their mouths. Some fear injury from the force of ejaculation. Others don't care for the taste of semen. And some object to swallowing semen, preferring to spit it out. Women need not fear injury from the force of ejaculation. It's not all forceful. It feels more like chewing that brand of gum with the liquid center. As you bite down on this gum, the liquid squirts out, but gently.

"If I can't come in your mouth," many men say, "I feel like you don't accept me or truly love me." Many men feel the same way about a woman's refusal to swallow semen. Try not to read such meanings into a woman's aversion to having semen in her mouth or swallowing it. It's simply a personal preference, and probably no reflection on how she feels about you. Don't badger her. Respect her sexual boundaries.

If a woman would rather not have semen in her mouth, the couple might compromise on fellatio with the man using a condom. That way he can ejaculate

inside her mouth, but not *into* it. For condom-covered fellatio, the man's pleasure can be enhanced by placing a drop of lubricant on the head of his penis before rolling on the condom. The woman's pleasure can be increased by using flavored condoms or sucking a lifesaver.

As for swallowing semen, when women learn that it's more than 95 percent water, some become less squeamish. Or a woman might keep a strong-flavored drink in a glass with a straw within arm's reach, for example, grape juice, chocolate milk, ice tea, red wine, or a liqueur. It's not difficult for most women to suck on a straw while holding a teaspoon of semen in their mouths. The beverage can help the semen go down easier. But if a woman would rather not swallow, that personal preference should be respected. In porn, the women rarely swallow. Instead, they make a great show of letting semen dribble out of their mouths and massaging it into their skin. This can be quite an erotic sight.

Some women don't want to taste or swallow semen because they fear it may spread sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It is possible for a man to give a woman gonorrhea this way. However, the AIDS virus is unlikely to spread orally, unless the woman has bleeding gums or a sore that allows semen-to-blood contact. To eliminate fear of spreading STIs, get tested and treated if you have any. Or wear a condom during fellatio—and intercourse.

“Coming in the woman's mouth and having her swallow are overrated,” Klein says. “They're largely symbolic. A woman can be head-over-heels in love with a man and totally accept him—and still feel that a mouthful of semen isn't her erotic cup of tea.”

Weston agrees: “A man once told me: ‘Coming is the fun part. Once the stuff leaves my body, I don't care where it goes.’ I wish men would let go of the idea that to feel erotically accepted, women have to ‘drink their essence.’”

Here's how men can enjoy the sensation of ejaculating in a woman's mouth without actually doing so: As you approach your point of no return, the moment ejaculation feels imminent, signal the woman. She withdraws her mouth and strokes your erection with two well-lubricated hands until you ejaculate.

How to Improve the Taste of Semen

Some women who are fine with accepting semen in their mouths complain about its taste, and as a result, are reluctant to provide oral sex, or allow men to ejaculate

into their mouths, or swallow semen. Not surprisingly, many people ask if there's any way to improve the taste of semen.

An extensive search of the medical literature and the Internet turned up no reliable research on this subject—but no shortage of opinions.

Urologists generally say men can't do anything about the taste of semen. "In healthy men," says Lawrence Ross, M.D., of the University of Illinois, Chicago, "the composition of seminal fluid is constant because it includes a precise mixture of components necessary to support sperm." If its composition is constant, its taste must be, too.

However, many women contend otherwise, insisting that what the man eats and drinks makes a significant difference in the taste of his semen. One-time porn star, Annie Sprinkle, who claims to have tasted the semen of 1,000 men, says vegetarians taste best, that drinking fruit juices improves the taste, and that smoking, alcohol, meats, and asparagus make semen taste worse.

Semen is mostly water, but it contains many other components, notably:

- Sperm, which account for about 2 percent of ejaculate volume.
- Fructose, fruit sugar, which nourishes sperm.
- Vitamins C, which helps maintain the integrity of sperm cells.
- Sodium bicarbonate, an alkaline compound that helps protect sperm from the slightly acid environment of the vagina and uterus.
- Various minerals: magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and zinc.
- Various proteins, amino acids, and enzymes.

Internet discussions of the taste of semen generally agree that a diet high in fruit and fruit juices, especially pineapple and apple juice, sweeten the taste of semen. They also generally agree on the list of foods that purportedly foul its taste: asparagus (which makes sense because of its well-known ability to alter the aroma of urine), broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, deep fried foods, meats, dairy foods, alcohol, and coffee, plus one nonfood item, cigarettes.

While there is no authoritative research on this subject, there's no harm in men increasing consumption of the foods that supposedly sweeten the taste, and going easy on the ones said to spoil it. In fact, increasing consumption of fruit and decreasing meats, fried foods, alcohol and cigarettes is good for health.

If a man would rather not change his diet, or if diet changes don't work, any foul taste can be masked if the woman sucks on a lifesaver while providing fellatio. Women who go this route tout peppermint and wintergreen lifesavers.

If a woman swallows, she need not worry about her waistline. Estimates vary, but most suggest that the typical ejaculation contains only 15 to 25 calories.

Finally, while fellatio can be great fun for both lovers, some men who have no difficulty having orgasm during masturbation or vaginal intercourse have problems climaxing in a woman's mouth. The reason is usually that oral caresses, while sublime, may not provide enough of the kind of stimulation the man needs to trigger orgasm. A combination of oral attention to the head of the penis plus vigorous stroking the shaft by hand is usually sufficient to trigger ejaculation. Some men really enjoy the combination of light, feathery lip and tongue action with tight-grip shaft stroking. For different, possibly preferable sensations, the woman might wear a glove on her hand.

For individualized help dealing with oral sex issues, consult a sex therapist. To find one near you, visit aasect.org, the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists, or sstarnet.org, the Society for Sex Therapy and Research.