

Dental Dams

Dental dams are small, thin, square pieces of latex that are used for oral-vaginal or oral-anal sex. They help to reduce the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (also called sexually transmitted diseases or STDs) during oral sex by acting as a barrier to vaginal and anal secretions that contain bacteria and viruses. Dental dams come in a variety of sizes and flavors, so you can find a dam that satisfies your tastes.

EFFECTIVENESS

Because dental dams act as a barrier to bodily fluids, they help reduce STI transmission. Many STIs, such as herpes, genital warts and HIV, can be transmitted through oral sex. Like condoms, dental dams must be used correctly and consistently in order to be effective.

USING DENTAL DAM

Although it may seem a little awkward to use them at first, dental dams are extremely easy to use. Before using the dam you may want to rinse off any powder that is on the dam and check to make sure there are no holes or perforations. The partner performing oral sex will hold the dam against the vulva or anus of the receiving partner. You can opt to apply a lubricant on the vulva or anus before using the dam. The lubricant can help increase the sensation for the recipient. Make sure the lubricant is a water-based lubricant (also called lube). Oil-based lubricants and lotions can degrade the latex and decrease the dam's effectiveness.

Dental dams are for one-time use only. When you use the dental dam, be sure to ONLY use one side. Do not flip the dam over for another round because you will expose yourself to the very fluids you are trying to avoid! Do not re-use a dam on another body part (e.g. from anus to vulva or vice-versa) because you can transfer germs from one body area to another. Do not re-use a dam for another act of oral sex later on either.

Many people believe that using a dental dam will diminish the enjoyment of oral sex. That is not how it has to be! Granted, the feeling of latex will be different than a tongue, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. Using a dental dam with lube can offer your partner a new type of stimulation. Although oral sex is considered less risky than vaginal or anal sex, there is still a risk of transmitting sexually transmitted infections (STIs). To be as safe as possible, use a dental dam every time you have oral sex.

BUYING DENTAL DAMS

Dental dams can be purchased at local pharmacies as an over-the-counter (no prescription needed) item.

SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

Call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment at the University Health Service (UHS). UHS offers a full range of gynecological and contraceptive services. You can schedule an appointment with your primary care provider (PCP) or with one of the women's health nurse practitioners for gynecological care and to discuss contraceptive options. All visits to UHS are strictly confidential.

LINKS

Planned Parenthood
<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

Go Ask Alice
<http://www.>