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## Sex with period and tampon?

### Question

Dear Alice,

I have my period and am using a tampon. Can I have sex?

Horny Tampon

### Answer

Dear Horny Tampon,

Long story short — you can totally have sex while menstruating, but it's definitely recommended that you remove your tampon first. The tampon sits in your vaginal canal, and putting other things (such as a dildo or a penis) in there with the tampon still in place can push it too far up into the canal. This could lead to significant pain or discomfort, and could be uncomfortable for your partner as well. It may also make it more difficult to remove the tampon. Although toxic shock syndrome is not as common as it once was, a tampon that is wedged up too high could make you more susceptible to that serious condition. That said, when it comes to having sex while on your period, there are some possible pros, considerations, and tips you might want to think about (to reduce risks associated with sex and to minimize mess), so read on for those!

Pros of getting busy during your period:

- Some women have reported experiencing **relief from menstrual cramps** during sex. Foreplay and orgasm can feel great and may be a welcome distraction from discomfort, and are possibly just as effective as a painkiller or hot water bottle!
- It can be **self-affirming!** Studies show that adults tend to have more sex during menstruation than teenagers, suggesting that in adulthood, both men and women may be more comfortable with menstruation. For some couples, having sex during a period might even be a turn on, since it can be hot to “get it on” during a time when sex is seen as taboo by some cultures or individuals.
- Blood can serve as a **natural lubricant**, making sex more pleasurable for both parties.
- Overall, not letting your period get in the way of your pleasure means you can be more flexible about the timing of sex (and **have more of it!**).

Considerations:

- There's a possibility for **increased risk of bacterial infections**. Some research has shown that it's easier for bacteria to get access to the upper reproductive tract (i.e., fallopian tubes) during menstruation because the cervical mucus is easier to penetrate during this time. As such, women may be at increased susceptibility to bacterial infection like bacterial vaginosis. Additionally, some bacterial growth may be encouraged by the abundance of iron found in menstrual blood.
- There's also a **risk of sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV transmission**. Because HIV can be

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found in menstrual secretions, and because there have been some associations between reported STIs and sex during menstruation, practicing safer sex (e.g., using a male or female condom) after removing your tampon is still recommended.

- **Pregnancy is still possible.** Just because you're on your period, it doesn't mean you can't get pregnant. Sperm can live for up to five days in the reproductive tract and fertilize an egg long after the climax has occurred. If you're having sex with someone who has a penis and you're not intending to get pregnant, make sure you're using some form of birth control.

Tips:

- Want to avoid staining linens? Spread a dark towel under you to minimize the mess. Still got blood on the sheets? Wash them in cold water promptly (before the blood has had a chance to dry).
- Have sex in places other than on the bed! On the floor (if there's no rug or carpet underneath, blood can be quickly wiped up afterward), or in the shower or tub (just be careful not to slip!).
- Change positions! Lying on your back or side may lead to less dripping.
- Keep a wet washcloth or towel nearby for easy clean up.
- Wash sex toys as directed after sex if they've gotten bloody.

Here's to going with the flow!

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