Dear Alice,

I have a question. My friends often make jokes about something called "fisting." I feel really left out when they joke about it, so could you please tell me what fisting is?! Thanks a lot.

Just wondering

Answer

Dear Just wondering,

It's understandable that you may not be up to speed on fisting. Chances are, most parents and health teachers don't cover this technique during the "birds and bees" talk. For now, let's excuse them, considering birds and bees don't have fists.

Also called handballing, fisting is when a person puts his/her entire hand into another's anus or vagina. For those who enjoy fisting, it can be a highly intense and pleasurable feeling for both the receiving and giving partner. While many enjoy the sensations, it is important to understand there can be risks involved. Fisting can create intense pleasure, but it can also cause pain and tissue damage. It is a sexual behavior that requires trust, communication, preparation, relaxation, patience, and lots of lube.

Spontaneity can be great, but take time to do your homework before getting your fist wet. For safety's sake, fingernails on the hand that's going in should be as short and smooth as possible. Carefully trim and file fingernails to remove any rough spots or hang nails. Next, gather safer sex materials including a few pairs of latex gloves and ample lube. Like condoms or dental dams, latex gloves act as a barrier against transmission of any sexually transmitted infections, and as a bonus the latex makes entry smoother. For vaginal fisting, water-based lube is a good choice since it is generally non-irritating; silicone lube is also a good choice. For anal play, you may want to use an oil-, water-, or silicone-based lube for long-lasting lubrication. Oil-based lubes do have the disadvantage of breaking down latex, but latex gloves tend to be thicker than condoms and should hold up all right. For more information about lube varieties, check out What is lube? in the Go Ask Alice! archive and the other Related Q&As below.

Beforehand, a lengthy session of foreplay can help to loosen up. Apply plenty of lube to the
fisting hand, completely coating the flat parts of the hand as well as the fingers and thumb. When the receiving partner feels ready, begin by *s-l-o-w-l-y* inserting the fingers, one at a time, into the vagina or anus. As you gradually reach further in, the fingers will curl over the thumb to make a fist. Make sure to keep the lines of communication open and check in frequently with your partner about how he or she feels. The receiving partner may want to call the shots, and he or she has the right to call it quits at any time. Once your hand is inside, try gently clenching and releasing the fist as if squeezing a stress ball to "fill up" your partner. Again, the key is to go slow and talk about how things feel. Due to pressure of the vaginal wall or anus, the fisting partner may feel like their hand is being squeezed uncomfortably. If this happens, be careful not to jerk out your hand suddenly, which may hurt your partner. Talk with each other when you are ready to pull out, and then gently uncurl your fist while sliding your hand out.

With patience and practice, fisting can be an incredibly fulfilling experience, but there are dangers. If the receiving partner has any pain, fever, or bleeding after fisting seek medical care right away. These symptoms may indicate a tear in the vagina or rectum so it's important to get to a medical attention quickly.

For more information on fisting, check out *A Hand in the Bush: The Fine Art of Vaginal Fisting* by Deborah Addington and *Men Like Us: The GMHC Complete Guide to Gay Men's Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Well Being* by Daniel Wolfe. These books are good resources for anyone who's interested in making a foray into fisting, or folks who just want to be "in the know" like yourself.

Alice!
Category: Sexual Variety

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