I wore the condom inside-out: What are our chances of pregnancy? [1]

Dear Alice,

Help me!!! I've put the condom on backwards when we were drunk and then turned it the right way round. I'm worried about my girlfriend. She is so sweet and kind and does not deserve this. What chance does she have of being pregnant?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Hmmm, you present an interesting conundrum and a couple of different issues in your question. It might be helpful to start by saying that placing a condom on backwards is not uncommon. When this happens, people sometimes use the condom anyway, flipping it around without thinking about the risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). At other times, people don't have another condom around and would rather use that one than not use one at all.

In an effort to prevent this situation from happening again in the future, have you thought about stocking up on condoms? By having more than one, you've got the option to throw that inside-out condom away, reach into your stash, and open another one. Or, consider an additional form of contraception to use with your favorite condoms. For example, if your partner is using hormonal birth control (pills, patch, ring, etc) and you are using a condom too, then there should not be anything to worry about in terms of pregnancy.

While it's possible that your girlfriend could become pregnant since you put the condom on backwards, took the condom off, and rolled it on the other way the chances are relatively low. If your pre-ejaculatory fluid contained sperm and was on the condom, that sperm may have gotten into her vagina. There would be an increased chance of pregnancy if your girlfriend was ovulating at the time.

Notice that the word "if" above is emphasized. Not all pre-ejaculatory fluid contains sperm. Pre-ejaculatory fluid is made by the prostate, not the testes, where sperm is actually produced. If you ejaculated a short while before having sex and hadn't urinated, some sperm from the prior ejaculation could have been left behind in the urethra and mixed with the "new" pre-ejaculatory fluid. If you hadn't ejaculated at least once shortly before you had sex, then the chance that your pre-cum contained sperm is unlikely.
Another part of your question noted is that you describe yourselves as "drunk" when you put
the condom on backwards. Your situation is a vivid example of how alcohol impairs judgment
(although plenty of people not under the influence could place a condom on backwards by
mistake ? after all, we're human). Have you thought about how to reduce the chances of this
error if having sex with your partner after drinking? Some people will only have sex while
sober to reduce the chances of condom errors. Perhaps this is where a back-up method might
be helpful?

It is not clear if your girlfriend knows that the condom was flipped around. If she doesn't know,
you might want to tell her what happened and let her know that you are worried and
concerned about her and the chance of pregnancy. If it's still within 72-120 hours, you can
both consider emergency contraception [2] to prevent a possible pregnancy. Keep in mind that
the sooner a woman takes emergency contraception, the greater the effectiveness. You can
also talk with her about the "what if" options. Your girlfriend will probably appreciate your
concern. Most people react favorably to these types of situations when a partner
demonstrates a deeper level of caring.

You mentioned that your girlfriend "does not deserve this." It's not a matter of whether or not
your girlfriend (or you) deserves the worry about possible pregnancy. People who have
intercourse may get pregnant or contract STIs. That's why information and discussions about
the "what ifs" are so important, before sex. Some people think these discussions are
unromantic or kill the mood, and in brief encounters, they may. In a committed, long-term
relationship, however, people often talk with their partners about their goals, values, priorities,
hopes, and dreams. These discussions can also include the "what ifs" of pregnancy and STIs,
as well as what sex means to you and your relationship. So the assumption is two people are
choosing and consenting to the sex they are having, accepting the risks as well as the
pleasure. You did not do anything bad to her, and anyone (and everyone) can make a mistake.

Regardless of the steps you take, kudos to you for caring, seeking the right information, and
planning for the future.

Alice!
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