

## Dangers of anal sex

(This is taken from Michelle Cretella's critique of *Cosmo* magazine and will need to be tailored for our purposes.)

As if this were not bad enough, the March issue of *Cosmo* went so far as to encourage anal sex. From a medical standpoint, anal intercourse, in contrast to vaginal intercourse, poses a serious risk to its participants regardless of age. For example, unlike with vaginal intercourse, the insertive partner in anal intercourse is exposed to fecal matter, and also likely to be exposed to the receptive partner's blood. This puts him at increased risk for STI's, including HIV, urinary tract infections, and pyelonephritis (kidney infections). The greatest dangers, however, are by far for the receptive partner.

The rectum differs from the vagina with respect to suitability for penetration by a penis or inanimate object (sex toy). The vagina is designed to expand, is supported by a network of muscles, and produces natural lubricants. It is composed of a mucus membrane with a multi-stratified *squamous epithelium* that allows it to endure friction without damage. The anus, in contrast, is designed to allow passage of fecal material out of the body. It is composed of small muscles and significantly more delicate tissues. The anus and rectum are not designed to accommodate repeated friction and stretching. Consequently, anal intercourse often results in anorectal trauma, bleeding, chronic or recurrent hemorrhoids, and chronic or recurrent anal fissures. Over time, the anal sphincter also loses its tone, which may result in chronic leakage of fecal matter. How sexy is that?

As unglamorous as those consequences are, at least they won't kill you; AIDS and rectal cancer, however, will. Since receptive anal intercourse often results in trauma and exposure to blood, the risk of acquiring STI's, especially HIV, is significantly greater than the risk associated with receptive vaginal intercourse. In truth, the estimated HIV risk with a *single* sexual exposure through receptive anal intercourse is 31 times greater than that of receptive vaginal intercourse.

There's more bad news for the receptive partner: semen has immune-suppressant activity that makes this already vulnerable tissue more prone to infection and the development of cancer. Rectal carcinoma results from infection with a carcinogenic strain of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

And, contrary to *Cosmo's* assurances otherwise, there isn't enough lube or latex in the world to make anal sex safe. *Cosmo's* practice of glamorizing sexual promiscuity and promulgating medical falsehoods that lead to deadly consequences for our youth is cause enough for the magazine to be restricted to adults only.

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