



Fellatio

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Fellatio (also known as **fellation**,^[1] and colloquially as **blowjob**, **BJ**, **giving head**, or **sucking off**^[2]) is an oral sex act involving the use of the mouth or throat, which is performed by a person on the penis of another person or oneself (autofellatio).^{[3][4]} Oral stimulation of the scrotum may also be termed *fellatio*^{[5][6]} or *tea bagging*.^[7]

Fellatio can be sexually arousing for both participants, and may lead to orgasm for the receptive partner.^{[3][4]} It may be performed by a sexual partner as foreplay before other sexual activities (such as vaginal or anal intercourse),^{[3][8]} or as an erotic and physically intimate act in its own right.^{[3][4]} Like most forms of sexual activity, oral sex creates a risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs/STDs). However, the transmission risk for oral sex, especially HIV transmission, is significantly lower than for vaginal or anal sex.^{[9][10][11]}

Most countries do not have laws which ban the practice of oral sex, though some cultures may consider it taboo.^[3] People may also have negative feelings or sexual inhibitions about giving or receiving oral sex; they may refuse to engage in it of their own volition.^[3] Commonly, people do not regard forms of oral sex as affecting the virginity of either partner, though opinions on the matter vary.^{[12][13][14][15]}



Female performing fellatio

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Etymology

The English noun *fellatio* comes from *fellātus*, which in Latin is the past participle of the verb *fellāre*, meaning to suck. In *fellatio* the *-us* is replaced by the *-io*; the declension stem ends in *-ion-*, which gives the suffix the form *-ion* (cf. French *fellation*). The *-io(n)* ending is used in English to create nouns from Latin adjectives and it can indicate a state or action wherein the Latin verb is being, or has been, performed.

Further English words have been created based on the same Latin root. A person who performs fellatio upon another may be termed a *fellator*; because of Latin's gender based declension, this word may be restricted by some English speakers to describing a male. The equivalent term for a female is *fellatrix*.

Practice

General

A person who performs fellatio on someone might be referred to as the giving partner, and the other person as the receiving partner. Fellatio can be sexually arousing for participants, and males commonly experience orgasm and ejaculation of semen during the act.^{[3][4]} People may use fellatio as foreplay to sexually arouse their sex partner before vaginal or anal intercourse, or other sexual activity,^{[3][8]} or they may use it as an erotic and physically intimate act in its own right.^{[3][4]} Though a person who receives fellatio is male, his sex partner may be of either gender. When the penis is thrust into someone's mouth, it may be called *irrumatio*, though the term is rarely used.^[16]



Illustration by Édouard-Henri Avril of fellatio scene

The essential aspect of fellatio is for a man's sex partner to take his penis into their mouth, and then move their mouth up and down the penis to a rhythm set by them mimicking the thrusting motion of vaginal or anal intercourse, with saliva acting as a lubricant, and being careful not to bite or scratch with the teeth.^[3] The man receiving fellatio can slow the rhythm of the stimulation by holding his partner's head. The man's partner may also orally play with his penis by licking, sucking, kissing or otherwise playing with the tongue and lips.^[3] Fellatio may also include the oral stimulation of the scrotum, whether licking, sucking or taking the entire scrotum into the mouth.^{[5][6]}

It is difficult for some people to perform fellatio, due to their sensitivities to the natural gag reflex. Different people have different sensitivities to the reflex, but some people learn to suppress the reflex. Deep-throating is an act in which a man's partner takes the entire erect penis deep into their mouth, in such a way as to enter their throat.

Nancy Friday's book, *Men in Love - Men's Sexual Fantasies: The Triumph of Love over Rage*, suggests that swallowing semen is high on a man's intimacy scale.^[17] The man receiving fellatio receives direct sexual stimulation, while his partner may derive satisfaction from giving him pleasure. Giving and receiving fellatio may happen simultaneously in sex positions like 69 and daisy chain.



Two men engaging in fellatio

Fellatio is sometimes practiced when penile penetration would create a physical difficulty for a sex partner. For example, it may be practiced during pregnancy instead of vaginal intercourse by couples wishing to engage in intimate sexual activity while avoiding the difficulty of vaginal intercourse during later stages of pregnancy.^[18] There may be other reasons why a woman may not wish to have vaginal intercourse, such as apprehension of losing her virginity, of becoming pregnant,^{[12][14]} or she may be menstruating.

It is physically possible for men who have sufficient flexibility, penis size or a combination of the two to perform fellatio by oneself as a form of masturbation; this is called autofellatio. Few men possess sufficient flexibility and penis length to safely perform the necessary frontbend.^[19] However, increased flexibility achieved via gravity-assisted positions, and physical training such as gymnastics, contortion, or yoga may make it possible for some.

Taste and odor

It may be that "few women praise the taste" of semen.^[20] However, as with breast milk, the taste of semen may be altered by diet. There are anecdotal reports that higher red meat and dairy intake may increase its generally salty taste. Asparagus has been noted to cause bitterness, while parsley, celery, cinnamon, and many kinds of fruit (especially tropical) are noted to sweeten it. The semen of heavy smokers and drinkers tends to carry a more acrid taste.

Health aspects

Sexually transmitted infections

Chlamydia, human papillomavirus (HPV), gonorrhea, herpes, hepatitis (multiple strains), and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs/STDs), can be transmitted through oral sex.^{[9][10][21]} Any sexual exchange of bodily fluids with a person infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, poses a risk of infection. Risk of STI infection, however, is generally considered significantly lower for oral sex than for vaginal or anal sex, with HIV transmission considered the lowest risk with regard to oral sex.^{[10][11][22][23]}

There is an increased risk of STI transmission if the receiving partner has wounds on his genitals, or if the giving partner has wounds or open sores on or in his or her mouth, or bleeding gums.^{[10][11][24]} Brushing the teeth, flossing, undergoing dental work soon before or after giving fellatio can also increase the risk of transmission, because all of these activities can cause small scratches in the lining of the mouth.^{[10][11]} These wounds, even when they are microscopic, increase the chances of contracting STIs that can be transmitted orally under these conditions.^{[10][11]} Such contact can also lead to more mundane infections from common bacteria and viruses found in, around and secreted from the genital regions. Because of the aforementioned factors, medical sources advise the use of condoms or other effective barrier methods when performing or receiving fellatio with a partner whose STI status is unknown.^{[9][10][11][21]}

HPV and oral cancer link

Links have been reported between oral sex and oral cancer with human papillomavirus (HPV)-infected people.^[25] A 2005 research study suggested that performing unprotected oral sex on a person infected with HPV might increase the risk of oral cancer. The study found that 36 percent of the cancer patients had HPV compared to only 1 percent of the healthy control group.^[26]

A 2007 study suggested a correlation between oral sex and throat cancer. It is believed that this is due to the transmission of HPV, a virus that has been implicated in the majority of cervical cancers and which has been detected in throat cancer tissue in numerous studies. The study concludes that people who had one to five oral sex partners in their lifetime had approximately a doubled risk of throat cancer compared with those who never engaged in this activity and those with more than five oral sex partners had a 250 percent increased risk.^{[27][28][29]}

Pregnancy and semen exposure

Fellatio cannot result in pregnancy, as there is no way for ingested sperm to reach the uterus and fallopian tubes to fertilize an egg. At any rate, acids in the stomach and digestive enzymes in the digestive tract break down and kill spermatozoa.

It is suggested that fellatio may, through "immune modulation",^[30] play a beneficial role in preventing dangerous complications during pregnancy, especially reducing the risk of miscarriage and pre-eclampsia. Specifically, several research groups have reported pre-eclampsia, a life-threatening complication that sometimes arises in pregnancy, is much less frequent in couples who practice oral sex, and even more rare in couples where fellatio regularly ended with a woman's swallowing her partner's semen.^[31]

The results were statistically significant and consistent with the fact that semen contains several agents that play important roles in the prevention of pre-eclampsia, which may arise out of an immunological condition.^{[30][32][33]} According to that view, preeclampsia is caused by a failure of the mother to accept the fetus and placenta, which both contain "foreign" proteins from the father's genes.

Regular exposure to the father's semen helps cause immunological tolerance in their proteins. Other studies also found while any exposure to the partner's sperm during sex appears to decrease the chances of various disorders, women in couples who practiced sex acts other than penile-vaginal sex are less than half as likely to suffer pre-eclampsia; studies reported that it would be impossible to conclusively assume the likely protective effect of other sex acts (including oral sex) or the correlation between these sexual practices was due to the presence of collinearity induced by some other protective factor not noted in the studies, for example, greater overall frequency of sex.^[30] The standard way to resolve such confounding questions in medical science would be through a randomized trial, but there are unique challenges to research in sexual health.^[34]

Cultural views

Semen ingestion

As late as 1976, some doctors were advising women in the eighth and ninth months of pregnancy not to swallow semen lest it induce premature labor,^[35] though it is now known to be safe.

Semen ingestion has had central importance in some cultures around the world. In Baruya culture, there is a secret ritual in which boys give fellatio to young males and drink their semen, to "re-engage themselves before marriage".^[36] Among the Sambia people of Papua New Guinea, beginning at age seven all males regularly submit to oral penetration by adolescents in a six-stage initiation process, as the Sambia believe that regular ingestion of an older boy's semen is necessary for a prepubescent youth to achieve sexual maturity and masculinity. By the time he enters mid-puberty he in turn participates in passing his semen on to younger males.^{[37][38]}

Virginity

Oral sex is commonly used as a means of preserving virginity, especially among heterosexual pairings; this is sometimes termed *technical virginity* (which additionally includes anal sex, mutual masturbation and other non-penetrative sex acts, but excludes penile-vaginal sex).^{[12][13][14][39]} The concept of "technical virginity" or sexual abstinence through oral sex is particularly popular among teenagers,^{[14][24][40]} including with regard to teenage girls who not only fellate their boyfriends to preserve their virginites, but also to create and maintain intimacy or to avoid pregnancy.^[14] Other reasons given for the practice among teenage girls are peer-group pressure and as their introduction to sexual activity.^[14] Additionally, gay males may regard fellatio as a way of maintaining their virginites, with penile-anal penetration defined as resulting in virginity loss, while other gay males may define fellatio as their main form of sexual activity.^{[12][15]}

Legality

Fellatio is legal in most countries. Laws of some jurisdictions regard fellatio as penetrative sex for the purposes of sexual offenses with regard to the act, but most countries do not have laws which ban the practice, in contrast to anal sex or extramarital sex. In Islamic literature, the only forms of sexual activity that are consistently explicitly prohibited within marriage are anal sex and sexual activity during menstrual cycles.^[41] However, the exact attitude towards oral sex is a subject of disagreements between modern scholars of Islam. Authorities considering it "objectionable" do so because of the penis's supposedly impure fluids coming in contact with the mouth.^[42] Others emphasize that there is no decisive evidence to forbid oral sex.^[43]

In Malaysia, fellatio is illegal, but the law is seldom enforced. Under Malaysia's Section 377A of the Penal Code, the introduction of the penis into the anus or mouth of another person is considered a "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and is punishable with imprisonment of 20 years maximum and whipping.^[44]

History

In ancient Greece and modern Japan, fellatio has been referred to as "playing the flute"; the Kama Sutra has a chapter on *auparishtaka* (or *oparishtaka*), "mouth congress".^[45]

Galienus called fellatio "lesbiari" since women of the island of Lesbos were supposed to have introduced the practice of using one's lips to give sexual pleasure.^[46]

The Ancient Indian Kama Sutra, dating from the first century AD, describes oral sex,^[47] discussing fellatio in great detail and only briefly mentioning cunnilingus. However, according to the Kama Sutra, fellatio is above all a characteristic of eunuchs (or, according to other translations, of effeminate homosexuals or transwomen similar to the modern Hijra of India), who use their mouths as a substitute for female genitalia.

The author of the Kama Sutra states that it is also practiced by "unchaste women", but mentions that there are widespread traditional concerns about this being a degrading or unclean practice, with known practitioners being evaded as love partners in large parts of the country. The author appears to somewhat agree with these attitudes, claiming that "a wise man" should not engage in that form of intercourse while acknowledging that it can be appropriate in some unspecified cases.



Depiction of fellatio on Attic red-figure kylix, c. 510 BC



Oral sex depicted in the Kama Sutra

The religious historian Mircea Eliade speaks of a desire to transcend old age and death and achieve a state of nirvana in the Hindu practice of Tantric yoga. In Tantric yoga, the same emphasis is placed on the retention and absorption of vital liquids; the Sanskrit texts describe how semen must not be emitted if the yogi is to avoid falling under the law of time and death.^[48]

The Moche culture of ancient Peru worshipped daily life including sexual acts. They depicted fellatio in their ceramics.^[49]

In some cultures, such as the Manchu, Telugu, and in rural areas of Cambodia and Thailand, kissing or briefly taking the penis of a male infant or toddler into one's mouth is considered a nonsexual form of affection or even a form of greeting. Such practices generally decline with urbanization or Westernization.^{[50][51][52]}

Other animals

The fruit bat, *Cynopterus sphinx*, has been observed to engage in fellatio during mating. Pairs spend more time copulating if the female licks the male than if she does not.^{[53][54]}



Female bats perform fellatio to increase copulation time. This species is the only non-primate known to exhibit this behaviour.^[53]

See also

- Cunnilingus
- Fellatio in Halacha
- Pearl necklace



Wikimedia Commons has media related to ***Fellatio***.

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