

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

Condoms have been used to protect against sexually transmitted infection since the sixteenth century, and to prevent unwanted pregnancy since the eighteenth century.

Q. My girlfriend and I had sex one night and from what I can tell we did everything right. No condom breakage, leakage or anything, and we even used lube for extra protection. What I'm worried about is that her last period started Jan. 24th, and she was supposed to start her next one on Feb. 22nd. We had sex on Feb. 9th and she claims that was her "most fertile" time. Is it normal for her to miss her period by a few days, or could this be something more serious?

A. Charting the dates you supplied, it sounds like your girlfriend has a 29-day menstrual cycle and that you had sex around Day 17 (Feb. 9th). In a "classic" menstrual cycle, ovulation occurs on Day 14 with the days preceding and following ovulation being the most fertile time. Menstruation begins about 2 weeks after ovulation. So, she's right, you had intercourse during a time when she is VERY likely to be fertile.

Mature eggs (ova) generally live for 24-36 hours after ovulation. Sperm can live for 3-5 days, making conception possible if you have sex in the days before or after ovulation. The tricky part is that women don't ovulate or menstruate like clockwork. Because ovulation varies, you should use protection each and every time you have intercourse in order to avoid pregnancy.

It is possible that your girlfriend is "late" due to a change in life schedule, travel, illness, or stress. But when in doubt, you can get very accurate results from a home pregnancy test one week after a missed period.

Used consistently and correctly, condoms are very effective in preventing pregnancy (90-98%). Using a water-based lubricant reduces friction – that's better for sex **and** the durability of the condom. To reduce the chance that any pre-cum (which may contain sperm) gets near your girlfriend, put the condom on prior to any penis-vulva contact. The Campus Health Service Pharmacy in the Highland Commons Building sells a variety of condoms, lubes, and pregnancy tests at low prices.

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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