



bare•back (ber'bak') *adv., adj.* **1** on a horse with no saddle **2** on a guy with no condom

Risky Business

Portland guys get a rise out of barebacking. Are they fucking hot, or just fucking up?

by Timothy Krause • Photos by Marty Davis

Do you get hard thinking about raw, skin-on-skin sex? You're not alone. More gay men are returning to life without latex.

Hundreds of Portland guys upload profiles to Web sites that specifically cater to barebacking. Even more go to clubs and parties or hook up with like-minded friends. For them, it's a conscious decision to pursue unprotected sex, often with anonymous partners.

Others, however, are not so deliberate. They make spur-of-the-moment judgment calls. Maybe with a fuck buddy who can't wait long enough to run out to Freddie's for rubbers and lube.

Hidden in between are the ones who decide to trust a boyfriend who swears he's clean.

Whatever their reason, guys into barebacking think a naked dick up the ass and the sharing of a little spunk is a really hot and intimate way to connect.

But even the hardcore faithful agree that barebacking outside of a monogamous relationship is still fuckin' risky.

During the past few years, increasing numbers of men who have sex with men have got-

ten sick as a direct result of bare-bones sex. We're not talking about only HIV but other sexually transmitted diseases, too. And for guys who are already poz, the proven danger of reinfection by any number of drug-resistant super viruses has moved from a distant theory to an immediate threat.

So what's going on? How do guys justify the risk? And what's our average horny homo to do if his boy toy won't slip on his slicker?

When you ride bareback...

visited three popular barebacking Web sites and invited 250 guys from the Portland metro

area to answer questions anonymously through e-mail about their sex lives. Fifty-one said they would; 27 actually did. Here's what I found happening right here in River City.

On the whole, barebacking tends to be more common among tops, men who are HIV-positive and those older than 40. Older, poz tops also typically have more partners and are more likely to knowingly fuck someone of a different HIV/STD status. They're less likely to use a condom or even check their partner's health status.

The full age range of barebackers in my survey ran from 22 to 66. A little more than half said they're HIV-negative, but two guys didn't know. And while tops outnumbered

bottoms 2-to-1, nearly one-third described themselves as versatile.

Most would sheath their swords if asked, but more than half usually don't. In fact, nearly half roll on a rubber less often now than just a few years ago. One out of 10 never uses a condom, refusing to have sex if his partner wants to use one.

There isn't any lack of partners for these renegades, either. It's common for them to have had some 20 or more sexual partners during the past year. One guy said he screwed 500, and his claim didn't raise an eyebrow among safe-sexperts.

About one-fourth rarely or never ask their partner's status. Young guys, bottoms and those who are HIV-negative tend to ask more often, but less than half actually believe what their bucking bronco tells them (which is probably a good thing considering three guys admitted to lying about their HIV-positive status).

Nearly two-thirds of guys have knowingly barebacked with a partner of a different HIV/STD status, and a majority mess around with familiar friends and anonymous strangers interchangeably. That includes