

# Oral Sex

Under the influence of latex.

**T**here I was, reclined in the endodontist's chair, my mouth crammed with wads of cotton the size of heavy-day tampons. A siphon suctioned my involuntary flow of saliva. An efficient woman in a flowered smock prepped me. The very thought of a root canal made me so nervous I would gladly have eaten the blue applesauce that catapulted the Comet Hale-Bopp followers to a better place. But it was too late for that. I had to rely on the deep-breathing technique, which luckily combines well with nitrous oxide. Focused on my third eye point, I slowed my breath, the gas kicked in, and I eased my death grip on the plastic-covered armrests.



The soles of the endodontist's Hush Puppies squished softly on the polished exam room floor. He made some small talk, to which I could not reply because my mouth was full of sanitary products. Over the buzz and slurp of the suction machine came a particular unmistakable sound. Snap, rustle rustle, snap followed by the faint smell of talc. He was putting on latex gloves.

To my subconscious brain, latex means sex. During these last 15 or so years droves of us dykes joined our gay brothers in learning safer sex practices, and I developed an automatic latex-erotica connection. I remembered my first encounter with that sleek little sheet of latex known affectionately as the dental dam. Reflexes took over and my crotch dampened.

"Anything can be eroticized." The workshop leader's words flooded back to me. About a dozen of us HIV prevention recruits had gathered at Liz and Carolyn's house for our first safe sex workshop. We crowded into the cozy living room. The lights were low and soft jazz played in the background. Liz served hibiscus tea and Carolyn set out a plate of mint Milanos.

The invited presenter, a certified "sexpert" from San Francisco, spoke in a calm relaxing tone. She rattled off the information that would empower us to insist on safer sex for ourselves and to spread the word to the community. Latex was the main deal. She blithely introduced us to dental dams, finger cots, and latex gloves. We all learned how to put a latex condom on a sex toy with our mouths. We were asked to write a short erotic story that incorporated latex. The evening ended with us going around the circle and reading our stories, which all included some rendition of "her swollen, hungry lips pulsed against the glistening latex dam." A hot and juicy time was had by all. The sexpert reminded us that anything can be eroticized and bid us good night.

**T**hat workshop had a lasting effect on me in ways I couldn't have expected. To this day I get instinctual nipple erections at the mere thought of a mint Milano. But it never occurred to me that I would so integrate the sexpert's words into my psyche that I would get turned on during a root canal.

Yet it was happening - everything took on an erotic association. The endodontist positioned a latex square over my molar. I squirmed in the reclining chair to accommodate my engorgement. This miscommunicated to the good doctor a call for more Novocain. The puddle under me grew. I was anesthetized, aroused, open for whatever these two latex-clad professionals would do to me. If I had been able to utter more than a cotton-muffled grunt, I'd have suggested they reposition the saliva siphon a couple of feet lower.

I barely remember the drilling. I left the office of oral surgery numb-faced, giddy and not just a little weak in the knees. That experience changed my life. Now squeaky shoes get me hot. I'm helpless around polyester print smocks. Chain-clasp paper bibs melt me. As a matter of fact, I have been feeling a familiar throbbing ache. I get all goeey just thinking about it. I need another root canal.

*Writer Sally Sheklow teaches essay and magazine writing at LCC downtown. New classes begin Jan. 6. Enroll at [www.lanec.edu](http://www.lanec.edu)*



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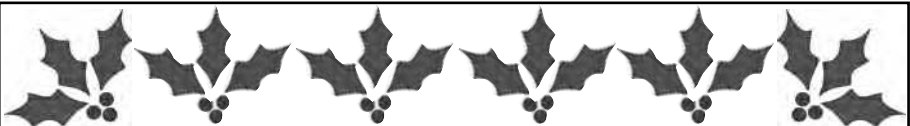
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