S2E3-draft2

[00:00:00] **Ronni:** Welcome to, this is probably a really weird question. The podcast where a medical doctor

[00:00:16] **Rebecca:** and a doctor of history talk about sex history and the not at all weird questions we hear from patients, students, and colleagues about our bodies and our sexualities. I'm Dr. Ronnie Ha. And I'm Professor Rebecca

[00:00:31] **Ronni:** Davis, and today's question is,

[00:00:35] **Rebecca:** what's that smell?

[00:00:41] Oh, how is that intonation? Was that, was that right? It

[00:00:44] **Ronni:** was great. I'm, I'm glad it wasn't like more academic like. What's that smell? No, I think the intonation is perfect.

[00:00:58] I like to feel fresh. [00:01:00] Fresh is a country lane after a spring shower. I like to feel fresh and confident. It's simple with some eve. The most convenient disposable douche you can buy. This exclusive one piece unit means there's nothing to assemble, and it's available in two fragrances or vinegar and water.

[00:01:19] The solution doctors recommend with summers e freshness has never been simpler.

[00:01:27] **Rebecca:** Well, I don't know about you, Ronnie, but I wanna. Fresh as a summers lane. And I don't, I don't wanna have my lady brain too overtaxed by having to assemble things. Certainly not. I appreciate a one piece

[00:01:39] **Ronni:** apparatus. What does a summers lane smell like?

[00:01:42] Exactly? Hot asphalt,

[00:01:44] **Rebecca:** uh, or dirt. Oh, hmm. I mean, I suppose there are breezes associated with the summer line. Sure, sure. All right. Well, friends, , welcome back.

[00:01:57] **Ronni:** So this is probably a really weird question.

[00:01:59] **Rebecca:** Where we [00:02:00] talk about smells . So yeah, you were really excited about this episode's question and uh, I think I need you to fill me in

[00:02:08] **Ronni:** on what gets you going about this one.

[00:02:10] Oh my God, I am so excited about this question for so many reasons, because it is a question that I get dressed up in various clothes from all sorts of people. Also, like the sense of smell. Really cool. Just the way that we smell things at all is just a wonderful way to nerd out. And also we, maybe this is surprising, maybe not, but we actually use the sense of our sense of smell to diagnose a few things in, in medicine.

[00:02:39] So it's a, it's an embarrassment of wonders here. There's just so many things to talk about .

[00:02:45] **Rebecca:** So tell me about some of the times that your patients have asked.

[00:02:49] **Ronni:** Oh man. People are so concerned about how they smell and like specifically how their junk [00:03:00] smells like, regardless of what kind of junk they have.

[00:03:04] So oftentimes people are concerned about. Having pelvic exams or having sensitive exams done because they're convinced that they just like smell terrible and that I, I, their clinician is gonna be repulsed. Sometimes people have had sexual partners tell them that they don't smell good or that they aren't gonna, you know, participate in certain sexual activities because their genitals don't smell good.

[00:03:30] And sometimes people. Are really attuned to the smell of their own, like vaginal discharge, for example. Like maybe it changes during their cycle or it changes if they have, um, a vaginal infection and so they are able to kind of self-diagnose if they have something going on.

[00:03:50] **Rebecca:** Well, yeah, I mean it seems like sort of a, there's a whole industry devoted to sort of how to fumigate your vagina, like how to totally.

[00:03:58] Clean it out [00:04:00] and perfume it from the Summer's Eve stuff. I remember those commercials

[00:04:04] **Ronni:** so well. So well. So if

[00:04:06] **Rebecca:** you were home listeners who are a little bit younger than Ronnie and I are, if you were home with a stomach ache in the 1980s and you got to watch daytime television mm-hmm. . Mm-hmm. in between dramatic scenes from days of our.

[00:04:24] You would see are the prices right? Oh, the price is right. Maybe less during the price is right. You would see Summer's Eve commercials. Um, and I have clear memories of my mom who brooks no nonsense from anyone under any circumstances. Very no nonsense. Mom walking in and going, pointing at the TV and being like, That is garbage and walking out

[00:04:46] **Ronni:** Oh, I love, I love your mother for that. Oh yeah. Uh, Nancy's

[00:04:51] **Rebecca:** full of a lot of unsolicited wisdom.

[00:04:54] **Ronni:** Boy, Nancy, kudos to you. Yeah. Like how wonderful that that was your mom's reaction and not like, [00:05:00] Rebecca, do we need to talk about , your personal hygiene? Yeah. Because boy, that would've been a, a gift that keeps on giving.

[00:05:08] Yeah.

[00:05:08] **Rebecca:** She, she wasn't like marching in the feminist movement of the early 1970s, but she was also working as a social worker, getting married, starting to have a family, raising little girls, uh, in the late sixties and seventies as a aware human being. Mm-hmm. and she certainly, Was paying attention, so, mm-hmm.

[00:05:29] Mm-hmm. , uh, she, yeah,

[00:05:30] **Ronni:** she took a lot of that in. So, I do wanna say at the front of this episode, we will be talking at some point about, um, a vaginal infection that can cause a distinctive odor. But I wanna reassure people that if you're asking yourself, What is that smell specifically if you have concerns about vaginal discharge or, or anything like that?

[00:05:53] What you're smelling is probably, uh, misogyny and toxic masculinity, [00:06:00] and has nothing to do with your anatomy. You know, in the vast majority of cases, there are a couple of cases when something could be going on that requires medical attention.

[00:06:10] **Rebecca:** And listeners, I would really like to invite you to send us your original recordings of, uh, the smell of misogyny.

[00:06:18] I think that just feels to me like that is a song waiting to be written, so Please,

[00:06:24] **Ronni:** uh, I love it. Yeah, like, do you think it would be like a hard driving rock anthem or do you think it would be something that's sort of, um, quiet? I'm thinking lo length. I'm thinking punk. You're thinking punk. I like it.

[00:06:41] Yeah. The smell of misogyny. Yeah, I like it. Yeah. Like a

[00:06:44] **Rebecca:** riot girl type body. Not like

[00:06:47] **Ronni:** Hello, darkness, mild

[00:06:48] **Rebecca:** friend . Yes, yes. No less, little less like

[00:06:51] **Ronni:** that. I've come to smell you again, . No. Oh shit. And anyway. Um, so can we talk a little bit about [00:07:00] how the sense of smell works? Because it is fascinating. Oh, tell me.

[00:07:04] Tell me. The way that we smell is unique, it not only in the way that we identify smells, but also in the way that the smell signals are transported to our brains. So one out of every 50 genes in our body are dedicated in some way to the sense of smell that is an enormous number of genes. So the nerve that.

[00:07:32] Primarily in charge of the sense of smell is called the olfactory nerve. It's also called the first cranial nerve, so cranial nerve one. There are 12 cranial nerves and they all do all sorts of different things in the face and neck. But there is one specifically for smelling, and that is cranial nerve one.

[00:07:49] So it kind of like sits on this little, this thin bony plate in the bottom of the skull. And

[00:07:57] **Rebecca:** the, I'm sorry, is that the one that the black widow [00:08:00] breaks in order to be free of the man who hypnotizes her and the other black widows? Oh, right before she kicks his butt,

[00:08:07] **Ronni:** she freezes all the other, no, I, I wish that I had more knowledge of the Black widow than I do.

[00:08:13] Okay. But yeah, you know, actually, It's interesting that you bring that up because the olfactory nerve that the bulb in the front of the skull is very vulnerable to damage. So if somebody injures that little, that very thin, bony plate, either from a head injury or um, an accident or something like that, they can actually lose their sense of smell in a

[00:08:37] **Rebecca:** movie.

[00:08:38] Him on to sort of punch her and to punch her hard enough so that he will break her nose, basically Uhhuh . Cause somehow he uses scent to control this army of lost girls that he turns into super killers. Oh, today I learned. Yeah. And then when she's done defeating him, she goes, boop, and, you know, snaps

[00:08:56] **Ronni:** her nose, snaps her nose back.

[00:08:57] Well, kudos to her. I suspect that her sense of [00:09:00] smell never fully returned , but I'm glad that her cosmetically, her nose was repaired. Um, so in the front part of your nose is mostly like hair and things that are dedicated to filtering the air that you breathe in, but in the back of your nose is a special kind of, um, Lining or cells, that's called the olfactory epithelium.

[00:09:26] So anytime you see like O L F at the beginning of something, that means sense of smell. So in this epithelium, there are receptor cells and they're special neurons that sense the smells. So I, I often will think about. Neurons or, or other kinds of receptors as like a lock-in key mechanism, right? So the, the receptor is like the lock, and then there's a key that fits in to make it do its job.

[00:09:53] And that's true of hormonal receptors too. There's like, you know, the hormonal receptors, the lock and then the hormone is the key that fits into the lock. [00:10:00] And there's also another pathway to that, to those olfactory receptor cells. It's through the roof of the throat, so that's why. You're stuffed up and you have a cold.

[00:10:14] You can't really taste things really well because eating is a huge part of our sense of smell. So much of what we consider flavor is actually smell because when you chew food, you release. Aromas and they go through this kind of like second channel in the back of the throat, up to the nose, so Hmm. When we are smelling something, either through that primary pathway through the nose or through that secondary pathway through the back of the throat, what happens is there are odor molecules that come in and they kind of like get stuck in the layer of snot or mucus that's back there, and then they dissolve.

[00:10:55] And then they bind to the receptors. So the, these little molecules are the key. And [00:11:00] they bind to the lock, they go into the lock of the receptors, and then that causes nerves to fire. And they signal kind of like into this, um, olfactory tract, which is like a long nerve that goes into the brain. And most other nerves, whether you're using sight or touch, They send their signals directly to like a relay center, and then they go somewhere from that relay center.

[00:11:26] The smell nerves take a direct route. To the limbic system, which is where like the amygdala and hippocampus are. And those are parts of the brain that are related to emotion and memory, which makes a ton of sense. Right? Oh. Cause if you smell something that reminds you of like grandma's kitchen, You can just like be transported to that yes place.

[00:11:52] And the same is true of of negative smell memories, right? Like if you had a really traumatic experience and there was a sense of smell associated with it, it can really [00:12:00] trigger a strong emotional

[00:12:02] **Rebecca:** response. I had that really strongly with an elementary school classroom that I walked into, and all of a sudden it.

[00:12:11] It was like this visceral experience of being seven or eight years old, and I was like, well, but this one is so much small. You know, it's like my, my visual memories and my olfactory memories were sort of jostling with one another because of course, my visual memory was a. This vast

[00:12:26] **Ronni:** room, you know, it was very tall ceiling.

[00:12:28] Of course you were so Lee, you were just a little one. Yeah.

[00:12:31] **Rebecca:** But uh, the smell was exactly the same. I'm sorry. Did you also, did you say the word molecules? I

[00:12:37] **Ronni:** did in fact say the word molecules. Rebecca Davis molecules because of molecules, we are connected the outside world from our bodies, like when you smell things.

[00:12:49] Because when you smell a smell, it's not really a smell. It's part of the object that has come off of it. Molecules. . So when you smell something bad, it's like in a way, you're eating it. [00:13:00] This is why you should not really smell things in the same way. You don't eat everything in the world around you, because as a smell, it gets inside of you.

[00:13:09] So the next time you go into the bathroom after someone else has been there, remember what kind of molecules you are. In fact,

[00:13:19] So I'm sure that was meant to be hilarious, but it's true. It's totally, totally

[00:13:24] **Rebecca:** true. And that, of course was a young Elijah Wood in character in the 1997 movie, the Ice Storm.

[00:13:32] **Ronni:** So, molecules. Molecules. So, uh, another interesting thing about our sense of smell is, Most of our receptors, specifically like neuroreceptors, are really precisely shaped so that only one key can fit into that lock.

[00:13:54] Um, but most of your olfactory receptors, you're [00:14:00] smelling nerve receptors, bind to a large number. Of different molecules. So, in the scientific literature, this is called, uh, promiscuity, they're very promiscuous Oh, neurons, because they will pair with a wide variety of, of odors. But that means that your brain can like, interpret a different smell based on which receptors, like how many, like is it receptor?

[00:14:32] 2025 and six and 13. Well, that triggers a specific smell, which is different than if other specific receptors are triggered. So what we ha we are able to, it is insane. It's so cool. So you can be, even if we have a limited number of receptors, we have this enormous variety of smells that we can differentiate because of this kind of like [00:15:00] different combin.

[00:15:01] That's amazing. That is actually so super cool.

[00:15:05] **Rebecca:** That's so cool. So you have something written in our notes that I am, I think is a joke. It's something called Fantasia. Mm-hmm. It's a sensation of an odor that isn't there,

[00:15:14] **Ronni:** that can't be real. That is definitely real. It is def And you know, interestingly, um, I.

[00:15:20] It is a, it's a diagnosis and I have seen a couple people who have, uh, phs specifically for cigarettes. Interestingly, they just feel like they smell cigarette smoke when it is not there, and sometimes smelling something that is not there. Can be a sign of a specific kind of seizure called a temporal lobe seizure.

[00:15:43] So oftentimes when people have this particular kind of epilepsy, which is a pretty severe form of epilepsy, they will have a smell as like a prodrome or a warning of their seizure coming. And oftentimes it's s something that smells really bad. They describe it as like burning rubber, and [00:16:00] that's a precursor to a a seizure usually.

[00:16:03] That's really fascinating. Yeah. Yeah. It's really interesting. I have a, I have a very sensitive, uh, sense of smell, which became a real problem when I was pregnant because I just, like, it was very difficult to be in the world. But every once in a while I'm like, do I have temporal lobe, epilepsy, ? Because I'm always smelling things that nobody else can smell.

[00:16:22] Yeah. Uh, maybe you noticed, Rebecca, that the, that the next thing in my notes is a quiz for.

[00:16:27] **Rebecca:** and I'm very, I'm a very competitive person and just wanna say that I was not warned and I have not

[00:16:33] **Ronni:** studied well, it is meant for you not to study. Okay. Okay. So like I mentioned, we often will use smells to diagnose things in medicine.

[00:16:45] So I would like you to guess which one of these is actually used in medicine as a method of diagnosis. And they're all, um, adjective. Okay, so we just, this is a descriptor of an odor, [00:17:00] mousey, maple syrup, fruity, fishy, none of the above or all of the above. So that's mousey, maple syrup, fruity, fishy, none or all.

[00:17:15] Why don't, I can't try to think what's something that's

[00:17:17] **Rebecca:** mousey would smell like, but I'm gonna go with

[00:17:20] **Ronni:** Maple. Incorrect. The answer is all of the above.

[00:17:25] **Rebecca:** Oh man. What is something mousey smell like? It's kinda like

[00:17:29] **Ronni:** musty or like, you know, if you think about kind of, if you go into a really old. Attic and it, I mean, there's that smell of dust, but also it can smell kind of like musty or like, um, like you have mice in your attic.

[00:17:45] Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. So mousey, um, both mousey and maple syrup are smells of urine that are specifically associated with inborn disorders of metabolism. So you have a baby that's [00:18:00] born and their body can't process a specific. Like amino acid or something like that, their urine will smell mousey or like maple syrup.

[00:18:10] And there is a condition called maple syrup, urine disease. Um, that is what, yeah. Isn't that fascinating? I have never actually smelled it myself, but I am quite confident that I would be able to identify Maple Syrupin disease and then fruity when people have diabetes and if they are. Going into something called D K A or diabetic ketoacidosis, which is when their body is not able to get energy from sugar because they don't have enough insulin.

[00:18:42] So their body starts breaking down other things like muscle and fat for energy, and it can produce something called ketones that smell very fruity. So people's urine and breath can smell really fruity, and we can use that as a way to. Diagnose, D k A. There's also a [00:19:00] specific bacteria. That when it is present, it causes a fruity smell called pseudomonas.

[00:19:06] It can make this like very fruity blueberry e smell. Hmm. And then the fishy smell, we can diagnose certain infections like, uh, trichomonas, which is a sexually transmitted infection or bacterial vaginosis. . Hmm. Okay.

[00:19:21] **Rebecca:** So I failed the quiz and I'm, I'm actually really upset about it. so

[00:19:26] **Ronni:** well, you, I failed your history quiz when you asked me something back in our, uh, Betty Dodson episode.

[00:19:32] I think . Okay. .

[00:19:36] **Rebecca:** Oh,

[00:19:36] **Ronni:** well. So I'm curious, uh, what sort of historical framing can you offer us about What's

[00:19:42] **Rebecca:** that? , I feel as if I'm running out of surprises because , does it have something to do with misogyny? Yes. Mm-hmm. , does it have something to do with racism? Yes. Great. So there's just, um, people have been concerned with the smell of other people's bodies since ancient times.

[00:19:59] So there were, [00:20:00] you know, perfumes and there were writings about the ways different people in different classes of the world. Smells. So this is a little bit of slang, but the Spanish word for whore putta is based on the Latin word for putrid. So this idea that sex workers smell bad, you know, comes through the language now, huh?

[00:20:20] There are so many different ways in how we associate what's a good smell versus what's a bad smell. So, I don't really know. But there, there were also theories that you knew somebody was a. Based on how they smelled so , um, in addition to seeing if they floated or not, I guess you could, you know, get a good whiff of them and see, I'm just looking through my notes and it, the, this idea, like in the early modern times that witches have extreme versions of the female scent, such that it's a foul stench.

[00:20:47] And for some reason I wrote in my notes, sex with Satan doesn't help

[00:20:54] **Ronni:** No, just self. I'm so curious about what that smell was that [00:21:00] supposedly was associated with witches.

[00:21:02] **Rebecca:** Yes. And in the United States, there are associations with anti-black racism, so mm-hmm. , white supremacist racists, saying that one reason to avoid what they called amalgamation, meaning interracial sex, was that, that people of African descent didn't smell as good and that everyone would start smelling, you know, if, if you had this web terribly racist stuff.

[00:21:24] Yeah. And so, Public health literature up to the 19th century, like has these associations between the sewer and female anatomy. So like associating sex workers and the underclass and making, yeah. So talking about, um, the sort of, uh, genitals of the sex worker and the sewer from when she came.

[00:21:45] **Ronni:** Right. Wow.

[00:21:46] That is, wow. There's just like, they're not . They're not, they're, it's

[00:21:50] **Rebecca:** not subtle. You subtle at all. No. So, you know, I think. You know, there was advice going back to the ancient world though, about the sort of [00:22:00] opposite about how women could send themselves to be attractive to men. And this is also based though in misogyny that, uh, because of the cursive Eve, it's women who were the first to fall.

[00:22:10] And so they need to then perfume themselves to make themselves acceptable to Adam, to to man. There were recipes from the 13th century, you know, for women about how to scent themselves prior to sex. But there's this long standing idea that a woman needs to somehow change the way she smells in order to make herself sexually appealing to a

[00:22:31] **Ronni:** man.

[00:22:31] And are these, these historical examples that you're talking about, are these like people scenting their skin or scenting their genitals or.

[00:22:42] **Rebecca:** I don't really know. Um, and the information is not terribly specific. I would just answer yes

[00:22:48] **Ronni:** to

[00:22:48] **Rebecca:** that. I don't really, yes. And because, you know, I think people tend to put perfume everywhere, so I imagine that was.

[00:22:55] You know, somewhat true then, but you know, Hippocrates had advice about putting [00:23:00] little bits of mer into the vagina as a, like an aphrodisiac. And so this idea that there were evens, strong smelling spices that you would put on and into your genitals was also. One of the things that they talked about. Wow.

[00:23:15] So we started this episode with that Sub Eve commercial, um, and vaginal douches, um, which I'm gonna allow you to get on your soapbox and talk about from a. Medical standpoint in just a second, and I'm gonna be cheering you on. They go back at least to the 19th century and I'm, they're probably much older than that, but they were mass marketed starting in the 19th century, and there was one that's all over the place.

[00:23:38] If you look in 19th century newspapers, and that's Lydia e Pinks Sanity Wash. For vaginal douches is scientifically prepared and has been tested in the hospital under the doctor's supervision and its benefits as it quote an antiseptic and quote as a deodorant. So this idea persists that that's [00:24:00] both vaginal douching is a benefit because it somehow disinfects.

[00:24:04] Mm-hmm. the vagina. Sure. But then also makes it smell better and that these two things are both necessary and connect. Um, has a long history and then it's become, you know, it was a big part of sort of feminist groups and black women's groups and so on in the 1970s and onward counteracting this. So I was, I was sort of came across this reference in some reading last week.

[00:24:27] That in 1970, a group called the Third World Women's Alliance, which was a group of African American Latina, native American women. Um, they hosted a workshop called The Feminine Stink Mystique. Ah. Um, and they were getting women together to talk about attitudes associated with third world women's bodies and quote, and that's in a wonderful book by the historian Ashley Farmer, where I found that.

[00:24:53] And so, They really saw this as part of their feminist organizing was to educate other women about, no, no, no. Those [00:25:00] things you think about the way your body. Those are the intersections of racism and sexism, telling you that your body's gross. And wow, that's a myth and that's not true. We talked about a whole different side of that movement with Betty Dodson last season, but this idea that educating women about their bodies was really important to women's liberation, um, with true across the Women's liberation

[00:25:24] **Ronni:** movement.

[00:25:25] Wow, how inspiring. I love everything about that. Yeah, because I think you're right. I think this is like. This is a topic where we see so much intersectionality of like racism and classism and misogyny and toxic masculinity. It is, it is fascinating. So I won't stay on my soapbox too long about like vaginal hygiene or douching or things like that.

[00:25:51] Suffice it to say that you don't need to do it, so, You know Jen Gunther, who um, is a physician who wrote this [00:26:00] brilliant book called The Vagina Bible, talks a lot about vaginal health and genital health, and kind of. How people have been conditioned to think that genitals are stinky and honestly . If you, again, if you're really worried about having an infection or having AEL to your genitals that you think is really not right, please go see somebody and have an exam.

[00:26:25] And there are tests that we can do to evaluate for specific infections, right? Because like I said, there are some things that can change somebody's odor, right? Genital odor. But I would say 99.9% of the time people are super freaked out about how they sell smell, and they're like very apologetic and there is no odor at all that I can discriminate.

[00:26:53] And this is coming from somebody who's an incredibly sensitive of smell and people who are trying to [00:27:00] convince you. You need to change the way that your genitals smell. Maybe they just don't know, right. What genitals are supposed to smell like. So there is no, there's no reason for you to have to use any of these products.

[00:27:14] I would say if you are thinking about, just like general hygiene, right? People need to wash their bodies. Genital area. So even the area that's like not inside the, so the parts of our bodies that have lots of pubic hair, for example, there are lots of sweat glands and oil glands and stuff like that. So just like your armpits need to be cleaned regularly, so does the outside of your body, so the inside of the vaginal can.

[00:27:45] Actually has a very unique, um, microbiome, meaning that there is a really robust community of bacteria there that are supposed to be there, and they all work together to create kind of an acidic [00:28:00] pH. So when you're thinking about the pH scale, that tells us how acidic something is, something that has a lower pH, like two is more acidic than something that has a.

[00:28:10] Six. That's cons. That's called basic. So the microbiome and kind of the environment of the vaginal canal is more acidic, and that's how things kind of stay in balance. The pH of most soaps is basic because it uses ly, which is a very, very strong base. So if you're using regular soap, on your junk, you're probably gonna be throwing the bacterial balance off, which could contribute to unusual smells.

[00:28:38] So if you're gonna use something in your genital area, try to just use it on the outside and try to find something that's like describes itself as pH balanced. Cuz what that means is that it's more acidic than other other soaps, but in general, Don't use feminine washes. There have, there have been some, um, studies that show [00:29:00] an association of using those washes with higher odds of having infection called bacterial vaginosis.

[00:29:07] It's not. Clear cause and effect, but as far as I know, there has been no study that shows that any kind of like genital or intimate washes are, are beneficial for your body. So just spend your money on something else. So that's a

[00:29:22] **Rebecca:** no on, uh, Lysol then. Uh, that

[00:29:26] **Ronni:** would be a hard pass on Lysol. Why do you ? Why do you bring that

[00:29:30] **Rebecca:** up?

[00:29:31] So, in the 1920s and thirties, Lysol marketed its bleach as a douche for feminine hygiene. And they put out these pamphlets and it was like for that conversation between a mother and a daughter and about how to not like ruin those intimate moments with your, with your man. You wanna make sure you're delicate and fresh.

[00:29:54] Side note, historians also think that people might have douched with Lysol after penis, [00:30:00] vagina intercourse as a way to try to kill the sperm and prevent a pregnancy or even that. People might have used it as a way to even try to abort or otherwise sort of disrupt a pregnancy that was already in progress.

[00:30:13] Nevertheless. Yes, there are all kinds of like wow in, in women's magazines, um, and so on. You would find these advertisements for douching with

[00:30:23] **Ronni:** Lysol. Wow. Yeah. Ouch. Buckets. You know, I , this probably does not need to be said, but I will say it anyway. Please don't use Lysol as a way to prevent a pregnancy or to end a pregnancy even during this time when access to abortion is incredibly.

[00:30:42] Limited and becoming more scarce. That's not a safe way to do that. I will also say that, you know, anything that is damaging like that, I mean, I would imagine that it would. Burn, right? And so anything that is causing chemical [00:31:00] burns or trauma to the lining of the vaginal canal, you know, that also puts you at risk for more infections, right?

[00:31:06] So we know that if you have inflammation from an, from like syphilis for example, or another S T D E, that you are at much higher risk for contracting h i V, just because of the inflammatory response, makes it much easier for that virus to take hold. Oh man, I cannot even, it just makes my body like crawl in on itself about

[00:31:32] **Rebecca:** When I talk about that with my students, they, you know, the hands shoot up and they say, well, would it work? Mm-hmm. and I, you know, and I, I don't really know what to tell them, um, in terms of the specific biology of it, but I have always said, I think that you would just so destroy. Natural mucus that is like what sustains sperm when they're ejaculated or introduced into a vagina, that maybe that would have some effect.

[00:31:58] But I also think the effect [00:32:00] would be that sexual intercourse

[00:32:01] **Ronni:** would hurt so

[00:32:03] **Rebecca:** much if you had done that, that you would do anything in your power. Not to have it at that point, and that abstinence is, you know, a form of contraception in that case, but I can't for sure. I said, all I know is that there are risks of like burns, like internal

[00:32:17] **Ronni:** burns.

[00:32:18] Of course. I mean, I'm sure if you look at the label of Lysol now, it's like, Do not douche with this, right? Please, if it comes into contact with any mucus membranes, call poison control immediately, man. Yeah. You know, I think Jen Gunther again, she has a a really great. OG and is quite active on social media, but I think she describes the vagina specifically as a self-cleaning oven.

[00:32:46] And it's just, it's gonna take care of everything on its own. You don't need to get involved, you just stay in your lane and let it take care of itself.

[00:32:55] **Rebecca:** So no to

[00:32:56] **Ronni:** Jade Egg then . I was gonna say also [00:33:00] no to Jade eggs. Uh, I, I will say yes to menstrual cups if they're used properly. Yes. To tampons if they're used properly.

[00:33:09] But yeah, otherwise just, just leave her alone.

[00:33:12] **Rebecca:** No steaming. Oh,

[00:33:14] **Ronni:** God. Uh, well, suffice it to say, Rebecca, that people who are worried about the way their bodies smell, please go see your healthcare provider. But also please be reassured that most likely everything is fine.

[00:33:34] **Rebecca:** Yeah, I like that. We're gonna end on a very positive note here.

[00:33:37] You're probably fine. You're

[00:33:39] **Ronni:** probably fine. And you know, if your partner is trying to make you feel bad about the way your junk smells, maybe it's time to reassess the status of your relationship rather than the status of your.

[00:33:51] **Rebecca:** Hey, now that's some . There's some advice.

[00:33:59] Friends, if you're [00:34:00] enjoying our podcast, please rate and review us. Leave a review on Apple Podcast. And most importantly, please tell your friends we love hearing from you. We love. Seeing how many downloads we're getting these days. Please let us know if the podcast is lifting you up or if it's a total bummer.

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[00:34:26] **Ronni:** You've been listening to, this is probably a really weird question, which is created, hosted, and produced by Rebecca Davis and Ronnie. Hi. You

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[00:35:03] **Ronni:** Nora Carlson is our website Guru and social manager.

[00:35:07] **Rebecca:** Mick Finnegan is our sound engineer.

[00:35:10] **Ronni:** Mark Erbacher composed and recorded our incredible theme music.

[00:35:15] **Rebecca:** We are grateful for the financial support of the Phil's Wickler Charitable and Memorial Foundation Trust. We additionally thank the foundation for Delaware County.

[00:35:25] **Ronni:** Please rate us and review us on Apple Podcasts to help other people find us in their feed.

[00:35:31] **Rebecca:** Our website is also where you can find links to our fabulous merch, which helps support the show.

[00:35:37] **Ronni:** Thank you for listening and keep on asking those questions.