Ask Your Family Doctor-Fall 2013

Rachael L. Ross, MD, PhD, a.k.a. Dr. Rachael answers your questions.

August 27, 2013 By Rachael L. Ross, MD, PhD

Q: Is it ever a good idea to have sex with an ex?

A: A former boyfriend or girlfriend can be like your favorite pair of shoes—they've already been broken in, so they feel great on your feet. In theory, this reasoning seems perfect. You hook up with your ex because he or she already knows your body and how to please you sexually. But let's deal with the reality of the situation. Sex with a former lover can be mentally and physically dangerous.

When you have sex with your ex, hormones are released that make you feel closer to that person. During orgasm and nipple play, the cuddle hormone oxytocin is released. The result? This hormone makes you feel even more attached to this person than ever. The second problem with ex-sex is that familiarity breeds comfort. Since you feel safe and comfortable with your ex, you are less likely to practice safer sex, so ex-sex can put you at an increased risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Remember, love is complicated. You've both probably been seeing other people since the breakup. This means that if you do opt to have sex with an ex, protect your heart, and your body, the same way you would if this person were a brand-new lover.

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