



CONDOMS

WHAT ARE CONDOMS?

A condom is a tube made of thin, flexible material. It is closed at one end. Condoms have been used for hundreds of years to prevent pregnancy by keeping a man's semen out of a woman's vagina. Condoms also help prevent diseases that are spread by semen or by contact with infected sores in the genital area, including HIV. Most condoms go over a man's penis. A newer type of condom was designed to fit into a woman's vagina. The female condom can also be used to protect the rectum.

WHAT ARE THEY MADE OF?

Condoms used to be made of natural skin (including lambskin) or of rubber. That's why they are called "rubbers." Most condoms today are latex or polyurethane. Lambskin condoms can prevent pregnancy. However, they have tiny holes (pores) that are large enough for HIV to get through. **Lambskin condoms do not prevent the spread of HIV.**

Latex is the most common material for condoms. **Viruses cannot get through it.** Latex is inexpensive and available in many styles. It has two drawbacks: oils make it fall apart, and some people are allergic to it.

Polyurethane is an option for people who are allergic to latex. One brand of female condom and one brand of male condom are made of polyurethane.

HOW ARE CONDOMS USED?

Condoms can protect you during contact between the penis, mouth, vagina, or rectum. Condoms won't protect you from HIV or other infections unless you use them correctly and consistently.

- Store condoms away from too much heat, cold, or friction. Do not keep them in a wallet or a car glove compartment.
- Check the expiration date. Don't use outdated condoms.
- Don't open a condom package with your teeth. Be careful that your fingernails or jewelry don't tear the condom. Body jewelry in or around your penis or vagina might also tear a condom.
- Use a new condom every time you have sex, or when the penis moves from the rectum to the vagina.
- Check the condom during sex, especially if it feels strange, to make sure it is still in place and unbroken.

- Do not use a male condom and a female condom at the same time.
- Use only **water-based** lubricants with latex condoms, **not oil-based**. The oils in Crisco, butter, baby oil, Vaseline or cold cream will make latex fall apart.
- Use unlubricated condoms for oral sex (most lubricants taste awful).
- Do not throw condoms into a toilet. They can clog plumbing.

Using a Male Condom:

- Put the condom on when your penis is erect – but before it touches your partner's mouth, vagina, or rectum. **Many couples use a condom too late, after some initial penetration.** Direct genital contact can transmit some diseases. The liquid that comes out of the penis before orgasm can contain HIV.
- If you want, put some water-based lubricant inside the tip of the condom.
- If you are not circumcised, push your foreskin back before you put on a condom. This lets your foreskin move without breaking the condom.
- Squeeze air out of the tip of the condom to leave room for semen (cum). Unroll the rest of the condom down the penis.
- Do not "double bag" (use two condoms). Friction between the condoms increases the chance of breakage.
- After orgasm, hold the base of the condom and pull out before your penis gets soft.
- Be careful not to spill semen onto your partner when you throw the condom away.
- If the penis is unusually thick, there are larger size condoms available.

Using a Female Condom:

- The female condom is a sleeve or pouch with a closed end and a larger open end. Some female condoms have flexible rings at each end. Others have a flexible v-shaped frame.
- Put the condom in place before your partner's penis touches your vagina or rectum.
 - For use in the vagina, insert the narrow end of the condom, like inserting a diaphragm. The larger end goes over the opening to the vagina to protect the outside sex organs from infection.
 - Guide the penis into the large end to avoid unprotected contact between the penis and the partner's rectum or vagina.
 - Some people have used a female condom in the rectum after removing the smaller ring. Put the condom over your partner's erect penis. The condom will be inserted into the rectum along with the penis.

- After sex, remove the condom before standing up. Twist the large end to keep the semen inside. Gently pull the condom out and throw it away.

NONOXYNOL-9

Nonoxynol-9 is a chemical that kills sperm (a spermicide). It can help prevent pregnancy when it is used in the vagina along with condoms or other birth control methods. Nonoxynol-9 should not be used in the mouth or rectum.

Because nonoxynol-9 kills HIV in the test tube, it was considered as a way to prevent HIV infection during sex. Unfortunately, many people are allergic to it. Their sex organs (penis, vagina, and rectum) can get irritated and develop small sores that actually make it easier for HIV infection to spread. **Nonoxynol-9 should not be used** as a way to prevent HIV infection.

CONDOM MYTHS

"Condoms don't work:" Studies show condoms are 80% to 97% effective in preventing HIV transmission if they are used correctly every time you have sex.

"Condoms break a lot:" Less than 2% of condoms break when they are used correctly: no oils with latex condoms, no double condoms, no outdated condoms.

"HIV can get through condoms:" HIV cannot get through latex or polyurethane condoms. Don't use lambskin condoms.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When used correctly and consistently, condoms are the best way to prevent the spread of HIV during sexual activity. Condoms can protect the mouth, vagina or rectum from HIV-infected semen. They can protect the penis from HIV-infected vaginal fluids and blood in the mouth, vagina, or rectum. They also reduce the risk of spreading other sexually transmitted diseases. Condoms must be stored, used and disposed of correctly. Male condoms are used on the penis. Female condoms can be used in the vagina or rectum.

For more information, see the FDA's condom brochure at <http://www.fda.gov/oashi/aids/condom.html>

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