



Condoms



Community and Health
Services Department

What are condoms?

A condom is a thin disposable covering that a man wears over an erect penis. A condom helps prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms come in different materials such as latex, lambskin and polyurethane. Latex and polyurethane condoms provide protection from STIs. Condoms come in different sizes, colours, textures and flavours. Use condoms that are lubricated for vaginal and anal sex. You may prefer condoms without lubricant for oral sex. It is important to find a condom that is comfortable for you and your partner.

How do condoms work?

A condom provides a barrier between a man's penis and his partner. A condom helps to prevent sperm from entering his partner. Condoms can be worn during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Either partner can put on the condom.

How effective are condoms?

The condom is up to 98 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and offers protection against STI transmission when used correctly and consistently.

Instructions for use:

- check the expiry date
- open carefully by tearing along side of the package
- pinch the air from the tip of the condom and position on the head of the erect penis
- unroll the condom all the way down the shaft of the erect penis
- after ejaculation, withdraw the penis (before the loss of erection), take off the condom and discard in the garbage

Important information about condoms:

- **Usage:** Use a new condom for every sex act. Do not reuse condoms.
- **Storage:** Store condoms at room temperature, away from direct sunlight. Do not store them in your wallet, pocket or glove compartment in a car.
- **To prevent breakage:** Use lubricant and an extra strength condom to help prevent condom breakage. This is especially important with anal sex, because of the higher risk for condom breakage.

If a condom breaks, tears or slips off during sex, emergency contraception (within 72 hours) and STI testing are recommended.

- **Lubricants:** Only water-based lubricants should be used with latex condoms. Oil-based products (like Vaseline) will break down the latex and make the condom less effective.
- **Spermicides:** Some condoms have a spermicide Nonoxynol-9 on them. This chemical may cause irritation and increase the risk of HIV transmission. Use condoms without Nonoxynol-9 if possible.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of condoms?

Advantages

- condoms provide protection against STIs
- condoms are available at drug stores, some variety stores and supermarkets
- you do not need a prescription for condoms
- anyone can purchase condoms
- either partner can put them on
- condoms are provided at no cost at our sexual health clinics

Disadvantages

- condoms need to be put on prior to genital contact
- condoms sometimes tear or slip off