



the female Condom



Community and Health
Services Department

What is the female condom?

The female condom is a barrier method of birth control for use by females. It can greatly reduce the chance of becoming pregnant or getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

The female condom is designed to be inserted into your vagina. It is a soft, loose-fitting polyurethane pouch with two flexible rings. It can also be used for anal intercourse.

How does it work?

Like the male condom, the female condom prevents contact with body fluids and sperm. The female condom has one loose ring that lies inside the closed end of the pouch. This ring helps keep the condom in the vagina. The other ring rests outside the vagina.

How effective is the female condom?

It is up to 95 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and offers protection against STI transmission when used consistently and correctly. In other words, of 100 women who use the female condom according to instruction, up to five women may get pregnant in one year.

Instructions for use

1. Squeeze the closed end ring with one hand. With the other hand, open the vagina or anus. You might need extra lubricant for the anus.
2. Insert the inner ring and the pouch of the condom into the vagina or anus.
3. With your index finger, push the inner ring and the pouch the rest of the way.
4. Approximately one inch will stay outside your body.
5. Make sure that the outside ring lies against the outside of the vagina or anus. This ring protects you and your partner during sex.

Important information about female condoms

The female condom should be inserted before there is any genital contact. You can insert it just before sex or up to eight hours ahead of time.

- use a new condom with each sex act
- do not use it in combination with a male condom as both condoms may not stay in place or they may tear
- add extra lubricant inside the condom if it slips up and down in the vagina

- if you feel the outer ring being pushed into the vagina, stop and readjust it
- be careful that the penis does not slip underneath or beside the condom
- when removing the female condom, rotate the condom before pulling out to decrease spillage
- read the package directions for insertion as brands may differ

Be careful not to tear the condom with rings or fingernails. If a condom breaks, tears or slips off during sex, emergency contraception (within 72 hours) and STI testing are recommended.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the female condom?

Advantages

- it is useful for women whose partners are unwilling to use male condoms
- it can be inserted by either partner
- it can be used for people who have a sensitivity or allergy to latex
- the polyurethane of the female condom is stronger than the latex of the male condom
- it can be inserted up to eight hours before, so sex can be spontaneous. You can still urinate with the female condom inside of you
- it is not tight on the penis. Your partner does not have to withdraw as soon as he has ejaculated, as the female condom will stay in place
- it can be used when the man finds it difficult to have a full erection using the male condom
- it can be used with both oil and water based lubricants

Disadvantages

- cost may be a disadvantage (range in price of \$2 to \$4 each)
- it can move around during sex and may make a noisy crackling sound