

Condoms

How do I use a condom?

1. The condom should be put on the hard penis before there is any vaginal or anal contact. The fluid that leaks before ejaculation may be present before intercourse. This can contain sperm.
2. You or your partner can put the condom on the penis. Sex can be more exciting if you do this together.
3. Leave about one-half inch of space at the tip of the condom so that the condom does not break. This can be done by pinching the tip of the condom as you put it on. Roll the condom to the bottom of the penis and smooth out any air bubbles.
4. Soon after ejaculation, withdraw the penis while it is still hard. Hold the condom firmly against the base of the penis to prevent the condom from slipping or leaking.
5. Check the condom for any damage such as holes, then wrap it in tissue and throw in the garbage. Do not flush condoms down the toilet.
6. Use a condom only ONCE each time you have sex.
7. Use only latex condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
8. If the condom breaks, falls off, leaks, or it is not used, consider obtaining the Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) and later testing for STIs.

When should I use a condom?

A condom should be used EVERY TIME you have vaginal or anal intercourse. Use a condom during a woman's period since she may still be able to get pregnant. Use a condom during pregnancy to lower the risk of sexually transmitted infections.

How well do condoms work?

If a condom is used by itself, between 3-14 out of 100 women will get pregnant. Using another method of birth control in addition to condoms can help lower the chances of pregnancy. If you are sexually active, a condom is the best way to decrease your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

How do I prevent condom problems?

Many brands of condoms are lubricated with a wet jelly or a dry powder. This helps to stop tearing during intercourse. A few drops of lubricant can be added to the inside of a non-lubricated condom to improve fit and comfort. KY products, Muko, and contraceptive foam are also good lubricants. Do NOT use oil-based lubricants (petroleum jelly or baby oil) as they may cause the condom to tear or become less effective.

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If a condom should break, and you do not desire a pregnancy, phone KFL&A Public Health's Sexual Health Clinic at 613-549-1232, ext. 1275 to obtain the Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP). It can be taken within three days of unprotected sex. ECP is most effective if taken as soon as possible. Pharmacies also provide this product over the counter.

If a condom breaks and you are concerned about exposure to sexually transmitted infection, phone KFL&A Public Health's Sexual Health Clinic at 613-549-1232, ext. 275 and book an appointment or come to one of the drop-in clinics (no appointment necessary).

Condom tips

Condoms may break down if they are not stored properly. Do NOT store them in a warm place such as a wallet or the car glove compartment. Store them in a cool dry place away from heat, sunlight and fluorescent light. Do not use condoms after the expiry date on the box.

Condoms come in various sizes such as regular, large and extra large. Regardless of the size or variety, the strength of the condom depends on the way it is stored and the way it fits on the penis. It is important to use a condom that snugly fits and covers the entire length of the penis. This is important to ensure the best protection and sensation during intercourse.

Common condom mistakes

Condoms are very effective barrier devices when used properly. A recent study on condom use suggests that many condom users make errors, which decrease their protective properties. Here are a few ways to avoid a problem.

1. Use the proper method to put on and remove a condom.
2. Use a condom from beginning to end of sexual intercourse.
3. Use the proper kind and amount of lubricant.
4. Ensure the condom fits properly.
5. Remember that condoms are less effective during anal intercourse.

The female condom

The female condom can be used during vaginal or anal intercourse to provide protection from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. When used properly, the female condom can be almost as effective as the male condom.

What about latex allergy?

Polyurethane condoms are available for individuals who have a latex allergy. Polyurethane condoms can provide equal contraceptive protection when compared with latex condoms. The effectiveness of STI protection in polyurethane condoms is still being studied. It is believed that they provide similar protection to that of latex condoms. Lambskin condoms are no longer recommended because they do not protect against STIs.

Spermicides

Spermicides such as Nonoxynol-9 and products containing it such as Vaginal Contraceptive Film, may add increased contraceptive protection with condom use. However, condoms lubricated with Nonoxynol-9 are not recommended because they can cause genital irritation, resulting in an increased risk of STIs.

References: SOGC Canadian Contraceptive Consensus (April 2004)
Ontario Men's Survey