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## Condoms

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The condom is a contraceptive method used by the man. It is a thin rubber or natural membrane sheath which is worn on the penis during intercourse. It prevents pregnancy by catching the man's semen and preventing the sperm that is contained in semen from being deposited in the woman's vagina. Condoms can be purchased in pharmacies and other stores without a prescription. They are inexpensive and rarely cause side effects.

Although condoms alone can be effective in preventing pregnancy if used correctly and consistently, we recommend that they always be used in conjunction with vaginal spermicides. Condoms and spermicides together are a highly effective method of pregnancy prevention (only slightly less effective than oral contraceptives.) Used together, they also offer some protection against some sexually transmitted diseases. For optimal effectiveness, it is important to follow the **Instructions for Use** of both the condom and vaginal spermicide (see Vaginal Spermicides sheet).

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### Instructions for Use

- Make sure the condom's expiration has not passed.
  - A new condom should be taken from the wrapper and unrolled all the way onto an erect penis **before** any genital-to-genital contact. Place a few drops of water-based lubricant (such as Astro Glide or KY Jelly) in the tip of the condom to increase sensitivity.
  - Pinch ½ inch at the tip to create an airless space to catch the semen.
  - To help avoid tearing or breaking the condom, it is best if the woman is well lubricated **before** intercourse. For additional lubrication, a water-based lubricant such as KY Jelly or Astro Glide may be used directly on the outside of the condom or at the vaginal opening. Petroleum products (e.g. Vaseline) should not be used as they destroy the latex.
  - After ejaculation, while the penis is still erect, the man should hold onto the rim of the condom while withdrawing his penis from the vagina. Otherwise, the condom may slip off and remain in the vagina, allowing the semen to spill out.
  - If you're not using spermicide with condoms for each sexual contact, have on hand a back-up spermicide (foam, cream or jelly) for emergencies. If a condom slips off, spills or breaks in the vagina, insert an applicator-full of spermicide into the vagina **immediately**. Also, consider calling the clinic in the morning for further advice and/or information on the Morning After Pill.
  - Use a condom only once.
  - Store condoms in a cool, dry place. If condoms are kept in wallets, they may not be good for use when needed.
  - Polyurethane condoms are now available for people allergic to latex.
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### A word about safer sex

The consistent use of condoms can help protect you and your partner(s) from contracting a sexually-transmitted disease. Natural or lambskin condoms do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases because the surface contains pores which can allow passage of viruses. For more information on safer sex guidelines, contact a clinic nurse, or discuss any questions you may have with a clinician or trained peer educator.

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For an appointment [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) or call **510-642-2000** Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice