

## Condoms

Condoms are the only contraceptive method that also reduce the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They are very effective at protecting you from HIV, gonorrhea and Chlamydia. While not as effective for syphilis, Human Papilloma Virus and herpes, they significantly reduce the risk of transmission. Even if you're already using a different kind of birth control to avoid pregnancy, it's a good idea to also use condoms every time you have sex to protect yourself from STIs.

Most people are familiar with more traditional condoms that cover the penis. Another type of condom is the single use internal condom (formally known as the "female condom") which is a sheath-like device that lines the vagina or anal wall and is inserted into the vagina or anus.

### **Where Do I Get Condoms?**

The traditional type of condoms, that covers the penis, are easy to get from many different stores, pharmacies, the Tang Center, and online. You do not need a prescription or ID to buy them, and they're inexpensive (or sometimes even free). Condoms are a small, discreet, and portable way to get protection from pregnancy and STIs. These condoms come in lots of different styles, shapes, and textures that increase sensation for both partners. Having your partner put the condom on can be a sexy part of foreplay.

Internal condoms can be purchased online and also may be available at Planned Parenthood and Family Planning clinics

Using condoms for oral, anal, and vaginal sex is a great way of protecting you from STIs. And that's really the sexiest part of all: condoms let you focus on pleasure and your partner without worrying about pregnancy or STIs. Safer sex is better sex because it stops stress from killing the mood.

### **Condoms help other methods of birth control work even better**

Adding condoms to your birth control lineup can give you extra pregnancy protection. No method is 100% effective, so adding condoms as a backup helps you prevent pregnancy if you make a mistake with your other method or it fails.

### **Condoms have no side effects**

Most people can use condoms with no problem. Rarely, latex (rubber) condoms can cause a severe reaction in people with latex allergies. Sometimes latex condoms or the lube on certain types of condoms can cause irritation. For those who have irritation try switching brands. If you are truly allergic, there are condoms and female condoms made from soft plastics like polyurethane, polyisoprene, and nitrile are latex-free. You can get these in most of the same places where standard condoms are sold.

### **How do I use a condom?**

In order for condoms to be effective, you have to use a new one correctly every single time you have sex. That means putting on a condom before there is any skin-to-skin genital contact, and keeping it on until you are done having sex. For traditional condoms that are used over a penis:

- it is important to make sure that you squeeze the tip of the condom before putting it on an erect penis. Not doing this can result in the condom breaking. You will also need to hold onto the condom when withdrawing the penis to keep it from sliding off and staying in the mouth, vagina or rectum. Having a supply of condoms and making sure they are close by can help you remember to use them.

When using an internal condom in the anus or vagina:

- first add lubricant to the outside of the condom.
- If using it for vaginal intercourse, insert the condom, squeeze the inner ring of the condom and put the inner ring and pouch inside the vagina. With your finger, push the inner ring as far into the vagina as it will go. The outer ring stays outside the vagina. Guide the penis into the condom, taking care that the penis is inserted into the condom and doesn't push the condom aside.
- If using for anal intercourse, you can either leave the inside ring in or take it out based on your preference. Put the condom over the penis or toy and slowly insert into the rectum.

After intercourse, the condom should be removed before standing up. Twist the outside ring and pull the condom out gently, making sure not to spill the contents. Condoms should not be reused, so throw away the condom (but don't flush it!)

### **Condoms can take some getting used to**

You may have heard that condoms take away some of the feeling during sex, or that stopping to put on a condom kills the mood. Protecting your health is important, but so is pleasure. The good news is, there are a few ways to make using condoms fun and sexy.

Practice makes perfect. The more comfortable and confident you are using condoms, the easier it'll be to put one on in the heat of the moment.

There are tons of different types of condoms, so everyone can find one that fits right and feels good. Some condoms are actually designed to make sex more pleasurable: textures like studs and ribbing, colors, flavors, and ultra-thin materials, and even special lubricants.

Using condoms as part of foreplay can be sexy and exciting. You can keep kissing and stimulating each other while getting the condom out and your partner can put the condom on and add lube. That way, the condom becomes part of the action instead of stopping the action.

**Remember: the best part of using condoms is knowing you're protecting yourself and your partner from pregnancy and/or STIs. And there's nothing sexier than that.**