

## Potential risks

There are no known health risks in using condoms. Frequent use of spermicides (more than 2 times per day) with condoms can cause internal vaginal irritation and increase the transmission risk of HIV infection.

### Where can you get male condoms?

Condoms are available without a prescription at many locations: drug stores, school health clinics, Planned Parenthood, public health department clinics, community health clinics, etc.

If your condom breaks or slips, you can use emergency contraception (EC) to prevent pregnancy. Ask your pharmacist, call your local family planning clinic, or visit the website <http://www.ec.princeton.edu> to find out where you can get EC.

## Male Condom

### How the male condom works

The male condom is a thin sheath that fits over the erect penis. For the prevention of pregnancy, it works as a physical barrier to stop sperm from getting into the vagina. For the prevention of transmission of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and HIV, latex condoms work as a barrier between partners so body fluids (i.e., semen, blood, vaginal secretions, and saliva) are not shared during sexual activity.

Condoms are made from latex (rubber) or polyurethane (synthetic condoms).

### How to use the male condom

#### Before sex

- Check the expiration date — do not use a condom with an expired date.
- Use a new condom for each individual act of vaginal, anal and oral sex throughout the entire sex act (from start to finish).
- Lubrication is important to decrease the chance of breakage. A lubricant can be added to the condom or to the vagina. For latex condoms, use only water-based lubricants like K-Y Jelly®, Astroglide®, or spermicidal



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creams or foam. Do not use oil-based lubricants (e.g. baby oil, hand lotion, petroleum jelly, or cooking oil). These can weaken the condom and cause it to break or tear.

- Before any genital contact, put the condom on the tip of the erect penis with the rolled side out.
- If the condom does not have a reservoir tip, pinch the tip enough to leave a half-inch space for semen to collect. Holding the tip, unroll the condom all the way to the base of the erect penis.
- If you feel the condom break (or it comes off) at any point during sexual activity, stop immediately and put on a new condom.

### After sex

- Immediately after ejaculation, withdraw the penis while it is still hard. Hold the condom firmly against the base of the penis to prevent slipping and leaking of semen.
- Throw it away (don't flush it!).

## Effectiveness

Male condoms provide very effective (dual) protection from pregnancy and STIs. They are in the Tier 3 level of contraceptive effectiveness because preventing pregnancy depends on using a new condom correctly with each act of sexual intercourse. Typically 18 out of 100 women are likely to get pregnant within 1 year of use.

Consistent and correct use of male latex condoms reduces the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmission. However, condom use cannot provide absolute protection against any STI.

Condom use becomes more effective with practice. Many people try different brands or types before finding the condom that is most

comfortable. Some people make putting on the condom a part of sexual activity.

## Benefits of the condom

Condoms (latex and synthetic) are safe and effective for preventing pregnancy and reducing the transmission risk of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, and hepatitis B. Condoms could also provide some protection against STIs that are transmitted primarily through skin-to-skin contact (i.e., herpes, HPV, and syphilis).

Because condoms help protect against STIs, they lower your long-term risk for infertility.

After ejaculation, you have immediate, visible proof of effectiveness when you can see semen within the condom. Condoms are inexpensive and easy to get from many sources. Some users report sexual enhancement (i.e., longer-lasting erections). There are few side effects; if you or your partner has a latex allergy, you can switch to one of the several synthetic condoms.

## Potential side effects or disadvantages

Some people are allergic to latex (rubber). Some users complain that condoms reduce sensitivity or interrupt sexual activity. Some users cannot consistently maintain an erection during condom use.

Some people may feel uncomfortable buying condoms in a drug store or health clinic. Some people may feel uncomfortable using a condom because they think condom use implies a lack of trust or intimacy. A new condom must be used every time, so some planning ahead is necessary.