

Condoms



Condom breakage rates are less than 2%.

Almost all breakage is due to incorrect usage:

- not leaving an air space
- improper storage
- tearing by fingernails or jewelry
- expiry date past
- inadequate lubrication
- wrong type of lubricant

Kinds of Condoms

Condoms come in three main types: latex, polyurethane, and natural skin. Natural skin condoms protect against *pregnancy only*, not against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Polyurethane and latex condoms provide excellent protection against pregnancy and many STIs, including HIV/AIDS.

The most commonly available condoms are made of latex. When choosing a latex condom, read the package carefully and if it indicates that the condom is "for novelty use", do not rely on it to protect you -- use an approved latex condom under it.

If you are allergic to latex, try a polyurethane condom. They are a little harder to find and more expensive than latex, but they provide excellent protection. They also tend to transmit heat better than latex, so some people prefer them.

High quality condoms are sold at the University Health Centre Pharmacy (located in the University Bookstore, Main Floor SUB) as well as local pharmacies and grocery stores.

Steer away from novelty condoms and those sold in vending machines, as they may be of lower quality. Novelty condoms, in particular, are not approved for STI or pregnancy prevention.

Do Condoms Work?

Condoms provide excellent (although not perfect) protection from many STIs including HIV/AIDS. Most condom failure is caused by incorrect or inconsistent use.

Condoms do have tiny pores in them and some people think these leak viruses, but this is not the case. Studies by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control have shown that the AIDS virus does not pass through latex condoms. This is in part due to the

need of a virus to attach to another particle such as a cell, and fluid dynamics including surface tension.

The European Centre for the Epidemiological Monitoring of AIDS did a study of 250 couples in which one partner was HIV infected. The study found that among the 125 couples who used condoms correctly and consistently, not one uninfected partner became infected.

The effectiveness of condoms in preventing STI transmission is endorsed by the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, and countless other health agencies.

It is always a good idea to use two methods of contraception rather than just one. The condom and birth control pill is a very popular and effective combination.

How Do You Use a Condom Properly?

- Use a new condom every time you have sex.
- Store a supply of condoms in a convenient cool, dry place away from light and temperature extremes.
- Check the expiry date before using.
- Open the package carefully to avoid tearing the condom.
- Press the air out of the reservoir tip before rolling the condom down the shaft. (This leaves space for the semen to collect. If you don't do this, the condom may break because there is nowhere for the semen to go.)
- Make sure you're holding the condom the right way up. It should look like this:



Not like this:



- If you start putting the condom on the wrong way, don't flip it over, as sperm and virus could already be on it. Discard the condom and start again with a new one.
- Roll the condom onto the erect penis **before there is any genital contact**.
- To increase sensation, put a drop of water-based lubricant inside the condom before rolling it on.
- When withdrawing the penis after intercourse, hold on to the base of the condom to prevent spillage.
- After removing the condom, tie it in a knot and dispose of it in a wastebasket -- not the toilet.
- Spermicidal foams and lubricants are *not* recommended as they can irritate tissues and increase the risk of transmission of STI's, including HIV.

- If you're allergic to latex, try a polyurethane condom.
- Never re-use a condom.
- Never use oil, hand lotion, Vaseline, or any other oil-based lubricant with latex condoms, as they weaken the latex and can lead to breakage.
- Always use a condom for oral sex (perhaps a flavoured one), as several STIs can be spread through oral sex.

A Word about Lubricants

It's wise to use a good *water-based* lubricant such as ID or KY jelly with condoms, as a lube can help prevent breakage.

Stay away from any lubricants containing petroleum or oil... that includes baby oil, hand lotions, vaseline, and hemp oil.

Also avoid lubricants and condoms containing non-oxynol-9, as it can irritate membranes and increase the risk of STI transmission.

Silicon-based lubricants feel nice and will not degrade condoms, but they are not recommended for use inside the body. Save them for external massage.