

## Condom

A condom (rubber, prophylactic, safe) is a sheath of thin, strong, latex, polyurethane or natural skin worn over the erect penis during intercourse to catch the ejaculated semen. Condoms are either pre-lubricated or non-lubricated. Choosing one or the other is a personal preference. However, additional lubrication may be added to a non-lubricated condom so that intercourse will be more comfortable. If a latex condom is used, only water-based lubricants should be applied. Never use oil-based lubricants including petroleum jelly (Vaseline), baby oil or hand or body lotions. They will quickly weaken the latex, making the condom ineffective.

### How effective are condoms?

The condom is an effective (98%) method if used correctly and consistently with each act of intercourse. However, about 15 pregnancies occur out of 100 couples using the method over a year, due to incorrect or inconsistent use. Latex (rubber) condoms, although an excellent barrier to sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, Chlamydia and HIV, are not a 100% guarantee. Natural skin condoms should not be used for disease prevention. Polyurethane condoms have been studied less than latex condoms for protection against STDs but are believed to provide protection similar to that of latex condoms.

### How to use a condom:

- Put the condom on the erect penis (either partner can do this) BEFORE the penis comes in contact with the partner's genitals/anus.
- Roll the condom all the way to the base of the erect penis.
- Leave 1/2 inch of empty space at the tip of the condom. Pinch the air out of the tip as you roll it on.
- If extra lubrication is needed, use K-Y Jelly. Do NOT use petroleum-based products. Oil based lubricants as well as some vaginal medications increase the risk of condom breakage. Read the label on the lubricant or vaginal medication. Do not use spermicide as a lubricant (see below).

### How to remove the condom:

- After intercourse, withdraw the penis immediately, holding on to the rim of the condom to prevent spilling.
- Check the condom for tears, and then throw it away. If the condom has torn during vaginal intercourse, consult your health care provider as soon as possible. If pregnancy is a concern, Emergency Contraception is available at the IU Health Center.

Store condoms in a cool, dry place. Heat, even body heat, may cause the rubber to weaken, so do not store condoms in a place that becomes very hot. If the condoms are kept dry, sealed and away from heat, sunlight, and fluorescent light, they will last until the expiration date printed on the condom packaging.

### Advantages:

Condoms are easily available without a doctor's prescription. They may be purchased in drug stores, clinics or some supermarkets and discount stores.

### Possible reactions:

Occasionally either partner may have a mild allergic reaction (itching, burning or irritation) to the latex condom. Switching to a polyurethane condom should solve this problem.

Some men, or their partners, complain that sensation is dulled with condoms. The addition of a drop of lubricant in the tip of the condom or switching to a different brand of condom may help.

Some people complain that condoms interfere with sexual spontaneity. This may be overcome by using them as a part of foreplay.

### **Spermicide and spermicidal condoms:**

There is new evidence that spermicides containing nonoxynol-9 (N-9) do not protect against HIV infection and may even increase the risk of HIV infection in women who use them on a frequent basis. When it comes to condoms with N-9 lubrication, there is no evidence that these condoms are any more effective in preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection than condoms lubricated with silicone. For this reason, some condom manufacturers have stopped the sale of pre-lubricated condoms with spermicide.

However, the researchers believe that nonoxynol-9 is safe for infrequent use. Contraceptives with N-9 remain a birth control option for women at low risk for HIV.

It has also been determined by the experts that condoms with N-9 should not be used during anal intercourse due to increased risk of sexually transmitted infection.

### **Condom Use Errors:**

The results of a recent study\*, conducted with IU male students, found that a large proportion reported a variety of errors and problems in using condoms. These errors and problems could increase condom failure or decrease the effectiveness of the condom.

#### **What were some of the errors reported?**

- 74% failed to check the condom for visible damage.
- 61% did not check the expiration date.
- 60% did not discuss condom use with partner before sex.
- 43% put a condom on after starting sex and 15% removed it before sex was over.
- 42% reported they wanted to use condoms but none were available.
- 40% did not leave a space at the tip.
- 35% reported slippage or breakage during sex.
- 30% placed the condom on upside down and flipped it over.
- Nearly 14% reported that a condom slipped off during withdrawal.

\* SOURCE: Crosby, R. A., Sanders, S.A., Yarber, W.L., Graham, C. A., & Dodge, B. (2002). Condom use errors and problems among college men. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 29, 552-557.