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## MALE CONDOM

### What is a Male Condom?

A male condom helps protect partners from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. A male condom is shaped like a penis and is usually made of latex. It can fit over an erect penis or a similarly-shaped sex toy. A male condom can be used for vaginal or anal intercourse, oral sex, or sex toys. It works by providing a barrier between partners so that bodily fluids, like semen, blood, and saliva, are not shared. This helps ensure that sexually transmitted infections are not passed and pregnancy does not occur. Male condoms are the only currently available effective and reversible birth control method for men. Male condoms are 88-97% effective.

### Use

Male condoms are only effective when placed just before intercourse or oral sex. At first, male condoms can be awkward to use; take your time and become familiar with them. It may be helpful to practice prior to sexual play. Either partner can put a condom on the penis as part of sexual play. For some people, learning how to put on a condom before sex play can help reduce anxiety with a partner. During sex, water-based lubricants can be used with male condoms. Using spermicides with condoms reduces the risk of pregnancy.

DO NOT use two condoms at once. Male condoms and female condoms should not be used at the same time. Placing two male condoms on a penis can raise the chance of tearing.

After sex play, throw away the condom. DO NOT REUSE it. The same condom should not be used for vaginal and anal intercourse.

### Intercourse

The male condom is placed on a man's erect penis. Before putting on the condom,

uncircumcised men may find it useful to pull back the foreskin. With one hand, squeeze a half-inch of the tip to remove air and leave room for semen. With your other hand, you can unroll the condom to the base of the penis. The band of latex at the open end of a male condom helps to keep it from slipping during intercourse.

After ejaculating, withdraw the penis before losing the erection. To keep sperm from leaking out, hold the condom on the penis during withdrawal. Throw away the condom and use a new one if sex continues. Maintain distance between you and your partner's genitals to help prevent infection or pregnancy. Sperm may still be on the penis after the condom is taken off.

### Oral Sex

Most people prefer using male condoms *without* spermicide for oral sex. You can also buy flavored male condoms.

For oral sex on a woman, male condoms can be used as dental dams to protect against the spread of infections. Cut off the closed tip of the condom. Make another cut along the side of the condom. This will give you a rectangular sheet. Place the sheet over the genitals or over a partner's mouth. Be careful to keep any areas of contact fully covered by the condom during oral sex. After oral sex, throw away the condom.

For oral sex on a man, the condom is placed on the penis as it would be for intercourse. After oral sex, throw away the condom.

### Sex Toys

If you and your partner choose to share a toy, like a dildo, using a male condom on the toy can help prevent the spread of infection. Change the condom between uses by different partners. DO NOT use the same condom for more than one person.

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## Your Health

There is a chance that male condoms could break or slip during sex. If this occurs, women may consider taking Emergency Contraception or the 'Morning After' Pill to prevent pregnancy.

## Prevent Condom Failure

The most common causes of condom failure are breakage and slipping. To prevent a condom from breaking, make sure there is enough lubrication from natural secretions or a water-based lubricant. Dryness creates more friction and can tear a condom.

To keep a condom from slipping off, make sure the rim stays near the base of the penis during intercourse. This is especially important at the end of intercourse as the penis is withdrawn. Either partner can hold onto the rim.

## Care

Oil-based lubricants, like Vaseline or edible oils, weaken male condoms and make them less effective.

Store condoms in cool, dry places. Exposure to heat, such as a back-pocket wallet or a hot glove compartment can create microscopic holes. Most male condoms can be kept in their packages for about 2-3 years. Those with spermicide are usually effective for about 2 years. Check the condom's expiration date before using it with a partner.

## Side Effects

If you or your partner experiences genital burning or itching, it may be a sign of an allergy to either the condom or spermicide used. If you used a latex condom, try using condoms without latex. You can also try a spermicide with different chemicals than the one you used. If your spermicide contains nonoxynol-9, try one without.

## Advantages

- ◆ Prevents the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS.
- ◆ Birth control for men.
- ◆ Available without a prescription.
- ◆ No hormonal side effects.
- ◆ Use can be part of sex play.
- ◆ Easy to use.
- ◆ Does not affect future fertility.
- ◆ May decrease women's risk for developing pre-cancerous cells on the cervix.

## Disadvantages

- ◆ Must be readily available.
- ◆ Can interrupt sex play.
- ◆ Can break or leak.
- ◆ Possible allergic reaction.
- ◆ Decreased sensation for some people.

## Emergency Contraception

You can prevent pregnancy *after* sexual intercourse by taking Emergency Contraception pills (EC). EC works by giving the body a short burst of synthetic hormones that disrupt the hormone patterns needed for a pregnancy to start. Brand names include Plan B and Preven. Also some types of regular birth control pills will work. EC is most effective 24-48 hours after unprotected intercourse but it can work for several days.

To find the EC provider closest to you, call the nationwide **EC Hotline** at **1-800-584-9911**, 24 hours a day in English or Spanish (also at [www.NOT-2-LATE.com](http://www.NOT-2-LATE.com)). If you already have birth control pills, ask them about the dosage to take for EC.

In Washington State you can get EC directly from many pharmacies without first getting a prescription from a doctor. Women's health activists are working to make EC accessible over-the-counter nationwide so that you could one day soon be able to purchase it directly.

## Further Resources

Cedar River Clinics:

[www.CedarRiverClinics.org](http://www.CedarRiverClinics.org)

Sexual Health Matters for Men:

[www.outerhebyouth.com/sexmen.htm](http://www.outerhebyouth.com/sexmen.htm)

*Birth Control Handbook*. Montreal Health Press, 2000.

*Our Bodies, Ourselves, for the New Century*. Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1998.

Feminist Women's Health Center:

[www.FWHC.org](http://www.FWHC.org) &

[www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info](http://www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info)