

Male Condoms

A male condom is a sheath or covering made of thin latex rubber or vinyl that fits over a man's erect penis. Condoms are known by many different brand names and are of different sizes, shapes, colours, and textures.

Effectiveness

When used correctly with every act of sex, about 2 pregnancies per 100 women occur over the first year of use. As commonly used, about 15 pregnancies per 100 women occur over the first year of use.

Advantages

- Prevent STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and pregnancy, when used correctly with every act of sexual intercourse. Consistent condom use reduces risks of HIV transmission by approximately 10 fold.
- Help protect against STIs, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), chronic pain, and possibly cervical cancer in women and infertility in both men and women.
- Can be used to prevent STIs during pregnancy.
- Can be used soon after childbirth.
- Are safe and have no hormonal side effects.
- User-controlled—can be stopped at any time.
- Offer occasional contraception with no daily upkeep.
- Easy to keep on hand in case sex occurs unexpectedly.
- Can be used by men of any age.
- Can be used without seeing a health care provider.
- Usually easy to obtain and are sold in many places.
- Enable a man to take responsibility for preventing pregnancy and disease.
- Increase sexual enjoyment because no need to worry about pregnancy or STIs.
- Often help prevent premature ejaculation (help the man last longer during sex).
- Male involvement is encouraged and is essential.
- Availability of wide range of condom types and designs can add variety.

Limitations

- Latex condoms may cause itching in a few people who are allergic to latex.
- Some people may be allergic to the lubricant on some brands of condoms.
- Either member of a couple may have latex allergy or reaction to spermicide (polyurethane condom is the appropriate alternative).
- May decrease sensation, making sex less enjoyable for either partner.
- The couple must take time to put the condom on the erect penis before sex.
- The supply of condoms must be on hand even if the woman or man is not expecting to have sex.
- There is a small possibility that the condom will slip off or break during sex.
- Condoms can weaken if stored too long or in too much heat or sunlight, or if used with oil-based lubricants, and then may break during use.
- A man's cooperation is needed for a woman to protect herself from pregnancy and STIs.
- May have a bad reputation because many people connect condoms with immoral sex, sex outside marriage, or sex with prostitutes.
- May embarrass some people to buy, ask partner to use, put on, take off, or dispose condoms.
- Use may interrupt or be perceived as interrupting lovemaking. Requires discipline to resist impulse to progress to intercourse after erection.
- May cause man to lose erection.
- Plain condoms may decrease lubrication and provide less stimulation for woman.
- Require prompt withdrawal after ejaculation, which may decrease pleasure.
- Make sex messy for the man (getting rid of condom).
- Require education/experience for successful use.
- Couples may be embarrassed to purchase or to put on condoms due to taboos about touching genitalia.

Client Assessment as per World Health Organization Medical Eligibility Criteria for Male Condoms

In general, anyone can use condoms safely and effectively. Only one medical condition prevents the use of condoms, i.e., severe allergy (severe redness, itching, and swelling after use). The client can be asked about this allergy and no tests are indicated. If the client is at risk of STIs including HIV/AIDS, s/he may use the condoms despite the allergy.

Method of Use

Male condom use can be started at any time. Care should be taken to use condoms for all sexual acts. Just one unprotected act of sexual intercourse can lead to pregnancy or an STI.

Technique of Use

- Make sure condoms are stored properly and obtained from a good source.
- Check manufacturing or expiry date on package.
- Take out condom from package.
- Do not use teeth or sharp objects to open condom package.
- Unroll condom slightly to make sure it unrolls properly.
- Place condom on the tip of the erect penis.
- Squeeze air out of tip of condom about 1–2 cm.
- Unroll condom down the penis.
- If condom is initially placed on the penis backwards, do not turn it around, throw it away and start with a new one.
- Start the sex act with condom on.
- After ejaculation, hold on to the condom at the base of penis while withdrawing it.
- Withdraw while still erect.
- Take off the condom carefully, without spilling semen.
- Tie the open end of the condom to prevent spills or leaks.
- Dispose of the condom safely.

Side Effects and Management

If the client reports any problems with condoms: Do not dismiss the client's concerns or take them lightly. If the client is not satisfied, help him in choosing another contraceptive.

Table 7-1. Male Condoms: Side Effects and Their Management

Side Effect	Management
Itching or rash on genitals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If itching continues, check for infection. Treat or refer for treatment as appropriate. • Recommend a dry condom if client had been using a lubricated condom. • If problem continues, help client to choose another method if client is not at risk of STIs. • For clients at risk of STIs, urge continued use of condom despite discomfort.
Man cannot maintain an erection while using condom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is often due to embarrassment. • Discuss how to make condom use enjoyable by having partner put it on. With counselling and experience, the problem may be solved. • Suggest a small amount of water-based lubricant on the penis and extra lubricant on the outside. This may increase sensation and help the man maintain an erection.

Counselling

Couples desiring to use condoms often benefit from specific instructions. Use a model and actual condom. Counsel new users about:

- Options among condom types
- Storage for safety and ready access
- How to negotiate condom use with partner and when to place condom on
- How to use the condom correctly

If a condom breaks:

- Clients must use emergency contraceptives to prevent pregnancy.

Provide the following information on care for condoms:

- Store condoms in a cool, dark place, if possible. Heat and light damage condoms.
- If possible, use lubricated condoms that come in square wrappers and are packaged so that light does not reach them. Lubrication may help prevent tears.
- Handle condoms carefully. Fingernails and rings can tear them.
- Do not unroll condoms before use. This may weaken them. Also, an unrolled condom is difficult to put on.

Always use a new condom if the first condom:

- Has torn or damaged packaging.
- Has a manufacturing date on the package that is more than 5 years past.

- Is uneven or changed in colour.
- ⑩ Feels brittle, dried out, or very sticky. Explain specific reasons to see a health care provider if either partner:
- Has symptoms of STIs such as sores on the genitals, pain when urinating, or a discharge.
- Has an allergic reaction to condoms (itching, rash, irritation).
- Other specific reasons to return: need more condoms, dissatisfied with condoms for any reason, have any questions or problems.

Follow-Up

At any return visit:

- Ask if the client has any questions or anything to discuss.
- Ask the client about his or her experience with condoms, whether the client is satisfied, and whether the client has any problems. Give any information and advice that the client needs.
- If client is satisfied: Give client plenty of condoms. Give each client a 3-month supply of condoms, if possible, or more. How often people have sex varies, but for most clients, 40 condoms probably will last for at least 3 months.
- If the client had intercourse, did he/she have intercourse even once without using a condom?
- Does the client know how to use ECPs? Does he/she need ECPs?
- If the client has problems that cannot be resolved, help the client choose another method.
- Emphasize to clients at risk for STIs including HIV/AIDS to keep using condoms despite any dissatisfaction. Explain that only condoms protect against STIs.