

CONDOM FACTS

Condoms (also known as “rubbers” or “prophylactics”) protect against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as AIDS, herpes, and gonorrhea. Use of condoms helps protect the health of both men and women.

Effectiveness

Used by itself, the effectiveness of a condom in preventing pregnancy is about 90%. This is increased when the condom is used in combination with spermicidal foam, another birth control method.

Buying Condoms

Condoms are available in two forms: latex (rubber) and processed animal tissue (“skin”). Latex offers much better protection against STDs and AIDS; the synthetic rubber prevents bacteria and viruses from passing through. Animal skin condoms are more porous.

No prescription is needed to purchase condoms. They are available in drug stores, convenience stores, family planning clinics, through the mail, and in rest room vending machines. Many varieties of condoms are available—they may be colored, textured, lubricated or nonlubricated, spermicidal or nonspermicidal. They also vary in thickness.

Care and Storage of Condoms

The date found on the package is the date of manufacture. Store condoms in a cool, dry place. With proper care, the condom can be opened up and used (one time) up to 5 years after the manufacture date. Extreme heat or cold can damage condoms, so they should not be stored in glove compartments, trunks of cars, or wallets.

How to Use a Condom

PUTTING ON THE CONDOM

- Remove the condom from the package.
- Roll the condom down on the erect penis, BEFORE the penis has had any contact with the vagina, pinching the tip to avoid forming an air pocket.
- Leave ¼” to ½” of space at the tip to catch the semen (not necessary if a nipple-ended condom is used).
- Handle the condom carefully, being careful not to rip it with a fingernail.

TAKING OFF THE CONDOM

- Firmly grasp the rim of the condom at the base of the penis, after ejaculation (coming) but before the penis gets soft.
- Withdraw the penis carefully while holding the rim of the condom.
- Be careful not to let semen from the condom come into contact with your hands or your partner's body. Even semen contacting the outer part of the vagina could cause an STD or pregnancy.
- Remove the condom and dispose of it safely.

REMINDERS

- Use water-soluble lubricants, if needed.
- Do NOT use petroleum-based jellies such as Vaseline, as they can break down the latex rubber of the condom.
- Use of a spermicide enhances the protection afforded by the condom.
- Don't store condoms in your hip pocket, wallet, or glove box.
- Never re-use a condom.
- Condoms are non-biodegradable; dispose of them in waste containers, not toilets.
- Sex with a condom can be more exciting because both partners are relaxed and secure.