

FACT SHEET: Male Condoms

Male condoms are sheaths or coverings that fit over a man's erect penis. Most are made from thin latex rubber; some are polyurethane (plastic).



Primary mechanism of action

- Work by forming a barrier that keeps sperm out of the vagina, preventing pregnancy
- Also keep infectious agents in semen, on the penis, or in the vagina from infecting the other partner

Effectiveness

Protection against pregnancy:

- As commonly used, about 18 pregnancies per 100 women whose partners use male condoms over the first year
- When used correctly with every act of sex, about 2 pregnancies per 100 women whose partners use male condoms over the first year

Protection against HIV and other STIs:

- Male condoms significantly reduce the risk of becoming infected with HIV when used correctly with every act of sex.
- When used consistently and correctly, condom use prevents 80% to 95% of HIV transmission that would have occurred without condoms.
- Condoms reduce the risk of becoming infected with many STIs.
 - Protect best against STIs spread by discharge, such as HIV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia
 - Also protect against STIs spread by skin-to-skin contact, such as herpes and human papillomavirus (if condom covers lesions)

Characteristics of male condoms

- Safe and easy to use
- Widely available
- Effective if used consistently and correctly
- Provide dual protection (STI/HIV and pregnancy)
- No side effects
- Can help men with premature ejaculation
- Do not require provider's help
- Can be used as a temporary backup method of contraception
- Protect women from conditions caused by STIs (pelvic inflammatory disease, cervical cancer, infertility)
- As typically used, less effective than many other FP methods
- Require partner communication and cooperation
- Latex condoms can be damaged by oil-based lubricants, heat, humidity, or light; polyurethane condoms are not as sensitive to temperature and light
- May reduce sensation

Side effects of condoms: None

Who can use condoms

All men and women can safely use male condoms except those with severe allergic reaction to latex (extremely rare).

How to use male condoms

1. Use a new condom for each act of sex. Check package for damage and check the expiration date. Tear open carefully without using any sharp objects.
2. Before any physical contact, put condom on the tip of the erect penis with the rolled side out.
3. Unroll condom all the way to the base of the erect penis.
4. Immediately after ejaculation, hold rim in place and withdraw penis while it is still erect. Slide the condom off, avoiding spilling semen.
5. Dispose of the used condom safely.

Practices to avoid

- Unrolling condom before putting it on
- Using oil-based lubricants with latex condoms
- Using condoms that may be old or damaged (e.g. dried out, brittle, sticky)
- Reusing condoms
- Practicing dry sex

Provide follow-up and counseling for

- Any client concerns or questions
- Reinforcing correct condom use and reminding clients that condoms should not be reused
- Allergy to latex

Dispelling myths regarding condoms

Male condoms:

- Do not make men sterile, impotent, or weak
- Do not decrease men's sex drive
- Do not promote promiscuity
- Cannot get lost in the woman's body
- Do not have holes that HIV can pass through
- Are not laced with HIV
- Do not cause illness in a woman because they prevent semen or sperm from entering her body
- Do not cause illness in men because sperm "backs up"
- Are used by married couples; they are not only for use outside marriage