

# Get the facts about... Condoms

## Choosing birth control...

There are two ways to enjoy sex without getting pregnant...sex other than vaginal intercourse or vaginal intercourse with birth control. The use of birth control is an individual and private matter. It affects your body, relationships and lifestyle. There is no perfect choice in birth control. Get the facts you need and talk to people you trust. Always use male latex or female condoms along with your birth control method to lower your chance of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV - the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

## Why Choose Condoms?

- Condoms are usually easy to get. No prescription is needed.
- Male condoms together with spermicide are 99% effective in preventing pregnancy.
- The female condom is 79-95% effective in preventing pregnancy (about the same as cervical barriers and diaphragms). The female condom offers more protection from STIs and HIV than all other female-controlled birth control methods.
- The male condom (without spermicide) is about 85-98% effective in preventing pregnancy.
- Using these methods every time you have sexual intercourse increases their effectiveness.

## Do they protect me from STIs and HIV?

Yes. These are the only birth control methods that help protect against pregnancy and STIs including HIV.

## How do condoms work?

Condoms work as a barrier. They keep sperm and most STIs from getting into the vagina, anus or throat during sexual intercourse. They also protect the penis from STIs.

Most male condoms are latex rubber pouches that fit snugly over the penis during sexual intercourse. Female condoms are polyurethane pouches which fit inside a woman's vagina and over her vulva (the part outside the vagina).

You must put a condom on the erect penis before you have either vaginal, anal or oral intercourse. Use lubricated condoms for vaginal and anal intercourse. Use non-lubricated condoms for oral sex.

Practice using condoms a few times before you have sexual intercourse. Condoms are easy to use once you know how. It's important to feel comfortable about touching your body if you choose this method.

## Male Condom

### Planning to Use Condoms

- Condoms come in different sizes. Try out a few different brands to see which one you like best.
- Be sure to get lubricated *latex* condoms with a reservoir tip. Lubricated condoms offer better protection because they go on your penis and into the vagina or anus more easily. Latex condoms provide protection against STIs. Natural membrane condoms are not recommended because HIV may pass through them. Novelty condoms are not recommended for oral sex, vaginal and anal intercourse.
- Always check the expiry date on the condom package or box. Don't use them if they are past their expiry date.
- Store condoms in a cool dry place, like a handbag, drawer or loose pocket. Sunlight and heat can break down the latex in the condom. For this reason, don't keep them in the glove compartment in your car or in a back pocket wallet.
- Lubricants can be used to increase sexual pleasure when added to the inside and outside of the condom. Also, condoms are less likely to break if a drop of water-based lubricant is added on the outside of the condom. When shopping for lubricants, look for water-based lubricants. Oil-based lubricants can break down latex condoms within seconds of use. Never use oil-based lubricants like vaseline, cooking oil, margarine, hand creams, or baby oil with your condom.
- Many lubricated condoms contain a spermicide called nonoxynol-9. Some people are irritated by nonoxynol-9. If you have this problem, use another kind of lubricated condom without spermicide.

### Just Before Sexual Intercourse:

- Put the condom on the *erect* (hard) penis before it has any contact with your partner's vagina, anus, or mouth.
- Carefully unwrap the condom package and take out the condom.
- You can put a drop of water-based lubricant inside the tip of the condom.
- Be sure the "ring" of the condom is on the outside so that the condom will roll easily down the penis.
- If you are not circumcised, be sure to pull back the foreskin before you put on the condom.
- Pinch the reservoir tip at the top of the condom to remove all the air. If there is no reservoir tip pinch about ½ inch at the tip of the condom so the semen has a place to go.
- Pinching the tip with one hand, roll the condom all the way down the erect penis with the other hand. If you like, ask your partner to do this part. Lubricate the outside of the condom.
- If you have trouble rolling it down, check the "ring"—the condom may be upside-down. Throw it away and try again with another condom.

### Just After Sexual Intercourse:

- After you ejaculate, hold on to the bottom of the condom and pull out and away from your partner before your penis gets soft. If you leave the penis inside until it is soft your condom will leak.
- Take the condom off away from your partner's vagina or anus. Check to see if there were any tears or holes. Throw it away in the trash can. Do not flush condoms down the toilet.
- Don't use the same condom more than once.

### What are the advantages of male condoms?

- They are easy to use once you learn how.
- Condoms help protect against STIs including HIV.
- Compared to most other methods of birth control, condoms do not cost a lot and are easy to get.
- You only use them when you need them.
- You can use the condom with other methods of birth control to lower the risk of STIs and HIV and pregnancy.
- Condoms are small and easy to carry.

### What are the disadvantages of male condoms?

- You must remember to have a condom with you every time you have sexual intercourse.
- Some men find that condoms reduce sensation. Lubricants can be used to increase sensation.

## Female Condom

### What is it?

A female condom is a soft, loose fitting polyurethane pouch. It has two flexible rings. One smaller ring fits inside the vagina and covers the cervix. The other larger ring hangs outside the vagina and covers the vulva. The inside of the condom is lubricated.

### How do I use it?

- To put the female condom in, pinch the smaller ring at the closed end of the condom between your thumb and middle finger. Put the condom in as far as it will go. Make sure the condom does not twist and that the outer ring is hanging outside the vagina.
- Put a drop of lubricant either on the tip of the penis or at the opening of the condom. This helps prevent bunching up and slipping. It may also make using the condom more comfortable. A small bottle of lubricant comes with the box of condoms.
- Be sure to guide the penis inside the condom.
- Do not use male and female condoms at the same time.
- After the man has ejaculated, lie down to take out the condom. Squeeze and twist the outer ring. Doing this prevents sperm from leaking. Pull the condom out gently. Throw it away in the trash can. Do not flush condoms down the toilet.
- Don't use the same female condom more than once.

### What are the advantages of female condoms?

- Female condoms give women more control over protecting themselves from pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- The female condom may give protection against vaginal warts and herpes.
- Female condoms are polyurethane, so they may be better for people who have an allergy to latex.
- Polyurethane is much stronger than latex and easier to store.
- You only use them when you need them.
- You can use the condom with other methods of birth control to lower the risk of STIs, HIV, and pregnancy.

### What are the disadvantages of female condoms?

- The female condom costs a lot compared to male condoms.
- The outer ring hangs out of the vagina—this may make it hard for some women to enjoy foreplay.
- The female condom twists easily. Sometimes the penis goes in next to the condom instead of inside the condom.
- Some women find them hard to put in.

### Where can I get condoms?

- You can buy **male condoms** at most drug stores, some supermarkets and convenience stores, and washroom vending machines. The quality of condoms sold in vending machines may not be as good as the condoms you buy from the store or get from a clinic.
- You can get **female condoms** at most drug stores and from some community health clinics.
- If cost is a problem, talk with your public health nurse or community health clinic.

### Where can I get more information about condoms?

You can get more information from your public health nurse, community health clinic, doctor or pharmacist. You can call the *Facts of Life Line* to talk about birth control, sexuality, relationships, STIs and pregnancy options. **Call 947-9222 in Winnipeg or toll-free in Manitoba at 1-800-432-1957.** You can also check out these web sites: <http://www.serc.mb.ca>; <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control/condom-10187.htm>; <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control/female-condom-4223.htm>

For information on STIs and HIV call the *AIDS/STD Information Line* at **945-AIDS (2437) in Winnipeg or toll-free in Manitoba at 1-800-782-AIDS (2437).**