

## What You Should Know About ...

See Glossary section for definitions of underlined words.

# Female Condoms

### What is a female condom?

- A female condom is a soft, loose-fitting polyurethane (synthetic rubber or latex free) pouch.
- It has two flexible rings. The smaller ring fits inside the vagina and covers the cervix. The larger ring hangs outside the vagina and covers the vulva.
- The inside of the condom is lubricated.

### How does the female condom work?

- The condom is a barrier. It stops sperm from getting into the woman's cervix during sexual intercourse. The female condom will prevent pregnancy 79-95% of the time.

### Can the female condom protect me from STIs and HIV?

- Yes. The condom offers protection against most sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.
- You need to use condoms every time you have sexual intercourse.
- It is the only method used by a woman that can protect you from pregnancy and STIs.
- It offers more protection from genital warts and herpes than the male condom, because it covers more of the genital area.

### Where can I get the female condom?

- You can get the female condom at most drug stores and from some community health clinics.
- The female condom costs a lot more than male condoms. If cost is a problem, talk with your health care provider.

### How do I use the female condom?

1. 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.
2. Put a drop of water-based lubricant either on the tip of your partner's penis or at the opening of the female 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 female condoms.
3. Be sure to guide the penis inside the female condom. The condom twists easily. Sometimes the penis goes in next to the condom instead of inside the condom.
4. Do not use male and female condoms at the same time.
5. After the man has ejaculated, lie down to take out the female condom. Squeeze and twist the outer ring. Doing this prevents sperm from leaking out. Do this before standing up.
6. Pull the female condom out gently. Throw it away in the trash can. Do not flush the condom down the toilet.
7. The female condom can be used for anal (bum) sex as well. Remove the ring on the closed end and insert the condom into the anus. The outer ring will hang out.

### What if the female condom leaks or breaks?

See a health care provider as soon as possible for emergency contraception.

## **Can I reuse a female condom?**

No. You must use a new condom every time you have sex. Never reuse a condom.

## **Where can I get more information?**

- From your health care provider, community health clinic, or public health nurse.
- From the Facts of Life On-Line: e-mail your questions to [thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca](mailto:thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca).

**If this method fails, and if you don't want to get pregnant, see a health care provider or pharmacist for emergency contraception as soon as you can.**

## **Glossary:**

**Cervix** – The lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It is also called the “neck of the uterus”.

**Emergency Contraception** – A method used to avoid pregnancy after sex, because a birth control method failed or was not used.

**Ejaculate/Ejaculation** – The release of semen from the penis. “Ejaculate” is also known as “come” or “cum” (street language).

**Genitals** – The external sex organs (vulva on a female and penis and scrotum on a male). Often referred to as “private parts”.

**Vagina** – The muscular tube inside a woman's body where the menstrual blood comes out from the uterus, where a baby comes out from the uterus during childbirth, and where a penis can go in for vaginal intercourse.

**Vulva** – The external female sex organs (genitals) of a woman.