

## How Condoms Work Best

Condoms prevent pregnancy and HIV transmissions by blocking the passage of semen and they are most effective when used from “start to finish” during every act of vaginal, oral or anal intercourse. Knowledge and practice lead to consistent condom use which reduces the risk of HIV transmission by **85-100%**. Consistent use is **85%-98% effective in preventing unintended pregnancy**. Practice makes perfect! The more you use condoms the lower your rates of slippage and breakage.

## Kinds of Condoms

Most commercially available condoms are made from natural rubber latex. A small number are made from lamb intestines. These “lambskin” condoms don’t offer the same degree of protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as latex condoms. Small pores in lambskin condoms may permit the passage of viruses including HIV, hepatitis b and herpes simplex virus (the virus causing genital herpes).

A small proportion of condoms are made from synthetic materials which are considered to be stronger and more resistant to deterioration than latex condoms- and may offer both greater sensitivity and degree of comfort. Unlike latex condoms, synthetic condoms are compatible with oil-based lubricants. People with latex allergies can use synthetic condoms. While synthetic condoms are widely considered to provide similar protection against STIs as latex condoms, they haven’t been as well studied.

There is no evidence to suggest that the more expensive spermicidal condoms are more effective than condoms without spermicide.

### How condoms are made...

A condom mold is dipped into “melted” rubber and pulled out; the condom mold is rotated 180 degrees and dipped a second time in to the “melted” rubber.

### Testing for strength and holes (“Quality Assurance”)...

Infectious agents or sperm can only move through a hole if carried by fluid, therefore a water leak test is performed on each production lot of condoms. This test detects for very small holes. If more than one in four hundred condoms are water-leakers in a production lot, it fails the rigorous Quality Assurance test and that condom mold is destroyed.

### What about testing for holes that are too small to be detected by the water-leak test?

Additional testing of some condoms in the production lot involves filling them with a fluid solution containing surrogate viral particles that are 5 times smaller than HIV particles. The condom is then placed in a fluid-filled beaker. Pressure is applied to the fluid inside the condom to see if any holes are present. Approximately 5 times the amount of pressure (60 mmHg) is applied to the condom for 30 minutes of simulated intercourse compared to the pressure usually involved (12 mmHg).

Research conditions involve far more pressure, time and a smaller viral size than typical intercourse conditions where HIV could be transmitted. Studies consistently show that there is no significant passage of fluid or surrogate virus.

**Latex condoms can prevent the transmission of even the smallest sexually transmitted virus or bacteria.**

**Resources:** Dr. Peggy Hitchcock, Contraceptive Technology- 18<sup>th</sup> revised edition, Trojan Condom Manufacturers, New York Times

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Everything You Need to Know About CONDOMS



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## Top 10 Things You Always Wanted to Know About Condoms

**1. Condom use really works in preventing HIV transmission and unintended pregnancy. HIV CAN NOT PASS THROUGH CONDOMS!**

**2. HIV and other sexually transmitted viruses and bacteria CAN be transmitted during oral, anal or vaginal intercourse—so always use a condom or a dental dam (or plastic wrap!).**

**3. Condom testing is rigorous and goes above and beyond adequate safety measure testing.**

**4. Condoms should prevent the transmission of any sexually transmitted infection (STI) that is spread via direct contact with semen or genital secretions (e.g. gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, hepatitis b and HIV).**

**5. Condoms should also provide some protection against STIs that are spread primarily by skin-to-skin contact (e.g. herpes simplex 2, human papilloma virus, and syphilis).**

**6. U.S. consumers now purchase more than 440 million condoms per year**

**7. Got a latex allergy? No problem— use a synthetic condom!**

**8. Not using condoms (rather than poor condom quality) is the most common error resulting in the risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection.**

**9. In 1564 A.D., Fallopius first described how linen sheaths could be used to prevent the transmission of syphilis. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, protective sheaths were made from dried animal intestines. The name “condom” likely comes from the inventor, Colonel Cundum.**

**10. In 1990, the U.S. Agency for International Development donated 800 million condoms to developing countries. That level of donation reached a low of 186 million in 1999, rose to 458 million in 2003 and will increase its level of donation to reach 550 million this year. Still, the BBC estimates that African men have access to only 3 condoms per YEAR given present levels of condom donation.**

There are very few ways to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections; therefore, people choosing to be sexually intimate should correctly and consistently use the male latex condom during all forms of intercourse to significantly reduce the risk of HIV and other infections.

While the use of a condom doesn't transform sexual intimacy into an entirely risk-free experience, solid scientific information exists showing that consistent condom use provides substantial risk reduction for both unintended pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections.

## Condom Use and Care

- Use a new condom before each sex act (oral, anal or vaginal).
- Use latex condoms. Use synthetic condoms if you have a latex allergy.
- If you use lubricants, use only water-based lubricants with latex condoms. Avoid oil-based lubricants like cold cream, mineral oil, petroleum jelly, body lotions, massage oil, or baby oil that can damage latex condoms.
- Open the package carefully. Never bite it or use scissors.
- Put the condom on an erect penis, but before sexual penetration.
- Hold the condom by the tip and unroll it so it covers the entire erect penis.
- If the condom doesn't have a "reservoir end," squeeze tip of condom to remove air.
- If the penis is uncircumcised, pull the foreskin back before putting on the condom.
- After ejaculation, while the penis is still erect, hold the condom close to the base of the penis and carefully withdraw.
- Immediately throw away used condoms- don't flush them in the toilet.
- If you feel a condom break while having intercourse, stop and withdraw immediately and consider using **emergency contraception (EC)**. EC is most effective (95%) in preventing pregnancy if used within the first 24 hours after contraceptive failure, unprotected intercourse, or sexual assault. It can be used up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse, but effectiveness rates drop. Call 1-888-Not-2-LATE to learn more about emergency contraception and to obtain phone numbers of providers who can prescribe it to you. Also check out the website [www.Not-2-Late.com](http://www.Not-2-Late.com) for further information.
- Store condoms in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight. Don't keep condoms in temperatures above 85 degrees. Note their expiration date and heed it!

