

Safer Sex is Great Sex

Better Wear
A Latex!



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Condoms

What are condoms for? If used properly, condoms will help reduce the risk of transmitting HIV and many other sexually transmitted infections (STIs, sometimes known as STDs). Condoms are also an effective means of preventing pregnancy, although no contraception can guarantee 100% protection. They work by creating a barrier that infections and sperm can not get through.

Finding the right fit! Like many aspects of sexual exploration, finding the right fit for you may be a process of trial and error. When someone says a condom 'doesn't fit' usually what they mean is it doesn't feel comfortable. While you can stretch any condom over a fist and forearm, they are not all one size and shape. Some folks will prefer a snugger fit, while others will enjoy a roomier fit. The only way to find out what you like is to try!

Latex Condoms: These are generally the most widely available condoms in Canada. They come in a range of colours, flavours, shapes and sizes. Japanese condoms are typically made out of thinner latex, which means they will transfer heat and sensation better than most North American condoms, while achieving the same safety standards.

Vegan: Most condoms are cured with a milk protein, but for those looking for a vegan option there are condoms cured with a vegetable protein instead!

Non-latex: Now made out of polyisoprene, these condoms can offer a great option for those with latex allergies. Additionally, they tend to transfer heat and sensation better than your typical North American condom.

The Female Condom: Unlike traditional condoms, the FC is designed to be inserted into the vagina or anus prior to

sex. Also non-latex, these condoms have their own set of instructions for proper insertion – be sure to give yourself time to go over them before you try them out.

How to use condoms (excluding the FC)

Condoms need to be stored in a cool and dry place. This means somewhere that doesn't get direct sunlight or become excessively hot. For example a bedside table is a good option, whereas a bathroom (which might get pretty hot and steamy after a shower) is probably not.

You will want to check the expiration date and then carefully open the package with your hands. Take a look at the condom – you want the rim to be on the outside, so that it will roll down easily. Before putting it on, gently press the air out of the tip of the condom. If the condom is going on to a penis, the penis should be erect, and if there is foreskin you want to pull it back before you roll the condom down. If it doesn't roll down it may be on backwards – take it off and throw it out, starting again with a new condom. Do not flip it around! After sex, hold the base of the condom with a firm o-shaped grip while pulling out. If the condom is on a penis you want to remove the condom before the penis becomes soft. Throw the used condom in the garbage (don't throw it in the toilet!) and wash up.

Other Barriers

Gloves: From fingering to fisting, gloves can be a great safer sex tool. Like condoms, dams and finger cots, gloves act as a barrier thus reducing the risk of transmitting STIs. They also offer a quick, clean solution if you don't have time or access to giving your hands a thorough wash. Plus you can pop a pair on for anal stimulation then toss 'em and have a

brand new pair for vaginal stimulation (so you don't have to risk introducing bacteria from the anus into the vagina where it can often lead to infection). Gloves are made of latex (which is stretchy, smooth and thin), or nitrile (which may be slightly thicker). Store your gloves in a cool and dry place.

Fingercots: Cots look like little condoms for your fingers! They are a great option if you only want to have a finger in play and don't want to waste a whole glove.

Dams: Dams are usually rectangular pieces of latex or polyurethane that are designed to be a barrier between the mouth and genitals. They might be used during oral-vaginal stimulation (cunnilingus) or oral-anal stimulation (analingus/ rimming). They greatly reduce the risk of transmitting STIs. Often they come in different colours and/ or flavours. Dental dams should be stored in a cool and dry place away from direct sunlight and heat. Check the expiration date on the dam and take the dam out of the package and lay it flat against your partner's body. To use a dam effectively you must ensure that the dam remains in place, and doesn't flip over. You may want to add a little lube to your partner's body before you put the dam in place. Like condoms, dams can only be used once: when you are finished, toss the dam in the garbage.

Further Resources

<http://sexuality.about.com>

www.sexualityandu.ca

www.ashastd.org

The Good Vibrations Guide to Sex (Book): Anne Semans, Cathy Winks, Phoebe Gloeckner

Tristan Taormino's Expert Guides (DVDs)