

Condom: Male

What is a male condom?

The male condom, sometimes called a rubber, is a thin, disposable covering that fits snugly over an erect penis. Condoms are used to prevent pregnancy and to help protect against sexually transmitted diseases or infections (STDs or STIs) such as gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, and HIV/AIDS. If you or your partner are having sex with more than one person, it's best to use a condom every time you have sex.

Male condoms are available in a wide variety of styles, colors, and textures. They may be made of latex, polyurethane (a type of plastic), or animal skin. Some condoms are lubricated. Only latex and polyurethane condoms protect against infection. Animal skin condoms do not. To make sure you have a condom that helps protect against disease, check the condom package for a statement that the condom helps prevent disease.

How is it used?

To protect against pregnancy and infection, use latex or polyurethane condoms during foreplay and every time you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex. Each condom must be used just once and then thrown away.

To use a condom:

1. Leave the condom rolled up before you put it on. Place the condom over the tip of your penis when it is erect (hard). If you have not been circumcised, pull your foreskin back before putting the condom on.
2. Leaving a space at the top of the condom to collect semen, roll the condom down over the penis so that it covers all of the penis. Squeeze the tip of the condom as you roll it down to release any trapped air and prevent it from bursting when semen is released from the penis during sex (ejaculation).
3. After ejaculation and before your penis gets soft, hold onto the condom at the base of your penis while you pull your penis out of your partner. Make sure that the condom does not slip off and spill any sperm.
4. Throw away the used condom. Never use the same condom more than once. It's very important to use a new condom each time you have sex.

It's a good idea to have more than one condom with you, in case one breaks. If a condom breaks, as soon as you realize it, take it off and use a new condom. If you don't have another condom, stop having sex until you can get another. If a condom breaks during sex, the chances of a pregnancy are higher, even if ejaculation has not happened yet.

Some lubricants may help prevent condoms from breaking during use. They may also help prevent irritation and so might help decrease the chance of infection. Water-based lubricants, such as KY Jelly, are a good choice to use with any condoms. Do NOT use oils, lotions, or Vaseline (petrolatum, or petroleum jelly)

with latex condoms. Oil-based lubricants can make latex condoms break. It is OK to use oil-based lubricants with polyurethane condoms.

Should I use a spermicide with the condom?

Spermicide is a chemical that kills sperm. You can use a spermicide foam or jelly with a condom to help prevent pregnancy if the condom breaks. However, some spermicides can irritate the skin around the vagina, penis, or rectum. If you have an irritation on your skin, then you have a higher risk of getting an infection. If you have sex several times in 1 day or have anal sex, it's probably better to not use spermicides, including condoms lubricated with spermicide.

What are the benefits?

Male condoms have a variety of benefits:

- They are very effective in preventing pregnancy if used properly.
- Latex and polyurethane condoms are the only form of birth control that also helps prevent STIs.
- Condoms can be bought in drug and grocery stores without a prescription.
- They are a relatively inexpensive method of birth control.
- They are small, easy to carry, and disposable.

What are the disadvantages?

The disadvantages of condoms are:

- A condom must be put on the penis **BEFORE** you have sex. If both you and your partner are not able to remember **EVERY** time, this is not a good form of birth control for you. Even if you forget just one time, your partner could get pregnant.
- Condoms can leak or break during sex, possibly leading to pregnancy.
- They may slip off when the penis is taken out of the vagina, possibly leading to pregnancy.
- If a condom is exposed to heat for a long time (for example, from being carried in a back pocket), it may weaken and break.
- If you have a latex allergy and use a latex condom, you may have mild itching and redness of the skin after using the condom. Or you may have a severe allergic reaction that is life-threatening. If you are allergic to latex, use polyurethane condoms instead.

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