

Six

reasons to use condoms



2

They Prevent STIs

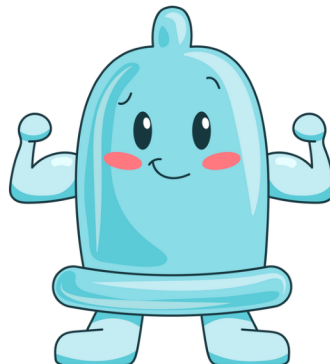
Condoms are very effective against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that spread through bodily fluids (like chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV). Condoms offer some protection against other STIs like herpes or HPV, but only when the sores or warts are in an area covered by the condom.



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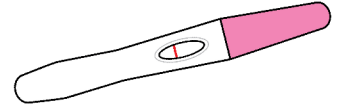
They're Easy to Use

The only advance planning is to make sure you have one whenever you might need it. Then just take one out of the package and roll it down over the erect penis. Put it on before sex starts, leave it on the whole time, and you're set.



1

They Prevent Pregnancy



Condoms are a great method of birth control. They put a barrier between sperm and egg. If sperm and egg can't meet, no one can get pregnant. Condoms are 98% effective if you use them the right way every time. We know that people make mistakes though—like putting it on too late, taking it off too early, or not using it all—so the real-world effectiveness of condoms is about 87%.

3

They're Easy To Get

You can buy a condom almost anywhere online or in person. Gas station sushi is a bad idea, but gas station condoms are fine (just check the expiration date).



4

They're Cheap or Even Free



A package of 3 condoms costs about \$6. Buy in bulk and each one is even cheaper. Plus, a lot of places—like health departments, clinics, and schools—provide free condoms.

6

They Can Add to the Fun



Condoms have a bad reputation for ruining the fun but that doesn't have to be true. Today's condoms are thinner so you can feel your partner. Many come with high quality lube and bumps and ridges that add sensation.

Choosing a Condom

There are a lot of different condom choices out there. It's easy to find a favorite.

Pick a Material

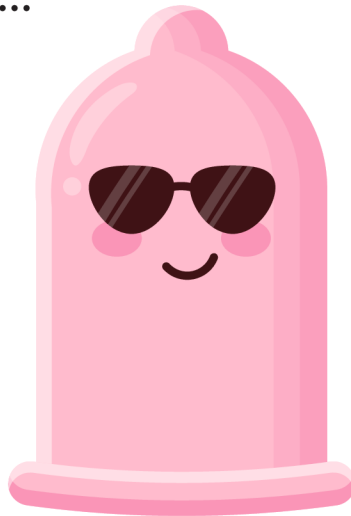
Condoms can be made out of latex, polyurethane, or silicone. All of these materials protect against pregnancy and STIs. They feel a little different to the touch—some are stretchier and others might feel silkier. You can pick the one you like best (if you're one of the ~3% of people who are allergic to latex, choose a different one). There are also “natural” condoms made from animal skin. These can protect against pregnancy but do not protect against STIs.

Pick a Shape

The classic condom is a straight cylinder with an extra space on top for the semen to go (this is called a reservoir tip). But condoms now come in many shapes because different shapes feel different. A condom that is bulbous—tight around the shaft of the penis and loose at the top—may add sensation during sex. Try a few different shapes.

Pick a Size

A condom should be tight at the base (so that it doesn't fall off) and have a little bit of room at the end. Most penises will fit in a regular size condom, but if it feels too loose or too snug, you can try a different size. Larger and smaller condoms are available (if you don't see your size in the pharmacy, try online).



Add Some Extras

Most condoms come with lubricant already on them. A condom with high quality lube on the inside and the outside can make sex feel better. Some condoms are also textured on the outside with ribs or studs or ridges. This can add sensations for the receptive partner. And, if you're using a condom for oral sex, you could always choose a one with a flavor. Passion fruit anyone?

Use More Lube

Most condoms are lubricated, but extra lube is still a good idea. Lube prevents friction and can increase pleasure. Silicone lubes are often silkier and last longer than water-based lubes, but they can be harder to clean off. Try a bunch to find a favorite. Just remember, you can't use oil-based lubes with condoms or silicone lubes with some sex toys.

Try An Internal Condom

There are some condoms that are meant to go inside the vagina or the rectum. These are called internal condoms. They are wider than other condoms and have a ring on the inside that helps you insert them and helps them stay in place. If used correctly, internal condoms can also prevent pregnancy and STIs. In the United States, you need a prescription to get the internal condom.

Visit www.ashasexualhealth.org to learn more about condoms.