

## Fact Sheet

# The male condom



### What is the male condom?

The most common type of male condom is a fine latex rubber sheath, which is worn on an erect (stiff) penis. Non-latex condoms made from polyurethane are also available.

Condoms are self-lubricated but additional water-based lubricants can be also be used on the outside of the condom.



### How does it work?

It works by collecting the semen, the fluid that contains sperm. They can only be used once and then are thrown away.

### How effective are condoms at preventing pregnancy?

Condoms have about a 2% - 18% failure rate which means that if 100 couples use them for a year then between 2 and 18 women will become pregnant.

Condoms are more effective when they are used by couples experienced in their use. They need to be used correctly for every act of intercourse.

Male condoms can be combined with other methods of contraception including contraceptive pills, vaginal rings, contraceptive injections, implants and IUDs. This provides effective contraception and prevents sexually transmissible infections (STIs) at the same time.

If you think the condom hasn't worked, for example if it breaks or slips off during sex, or you forget to use it, the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) is available from pharmacies. After unprotected sex, the ECP can be used up to 120 hours to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy (but it is more effective the sooner it is taken).

### Are there any side effects?

There are no side effects, except if you are allergic to latex rubber or to the lubricant. If either person gets a rash or any discomfort, check with your doctor or clinic.

You can use non-latex polyurethane condoms as an alternative if you, or your partner, are allergic to latex rubber.

### Where do you get condoms?

Male condoms and lubricants are available at Family Planning clinics, pharmacies, sexual health clinics, vending machines, supermarkets and by mail order.

### What are the advantages of condoms?

- Using condoms reduces the risk of pregnancy
- Using condoms reduces the risk of STIs
- No prescription is needed to buy them
- Condoms are easy to obtain and inexpensive

### Are there any disadvantages?

Condoms are perishable so they need to be kept in a cool place and used before the expiry date, otherwise they can break.

Do not use oil based lubricants such as petroleum jelly or massage oil with latex condoms as these can cause breakage.

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## How do you use them?

- Condoms are individually wrapped in packets, so first carefully open the packet, making sure you do not tear the condom with your fingernails
- The condom will be rolled up. It will look like a circle of loose fine rubber with a thick rim, which is actually the rolled up condom. Make sure the rim is rolled towards the centre on the side facing you. This is important as it will then roll down properly
- Hold and squeeze the centre of the circle where the condom is loose, with your thumb and first two fingers. This will make space for the semen when you come. Some condoms have a special shape like a nipple at the end especially for this purpose
- The penis must be erect before you put on the condom. With the condom still rolled up, and while still holding the tip, put the condom on the head of the penis like a cap
- Using your other hand (thumb and first two fingers), roll the condom all the way down to the base of the penis
- Put some additional water-based lubricant on the outside of the condom if required
- After sex and before the penis has become soft, hold onto the condom at the base of the penis so that the condom does not come off, and semen does not leak out, and carefully pull away from your partner
- Take off the condom and tie a knot in the open end to keep the semen inside the condom
- Wrap the condom in a tissue or some paper, and put it in the bin. Do not flush it down the toilet



## Remember:

- Store condoms away from heat and sunlight
- Check the expiry date on the pack before you use it
- Check that the condom packet has not been torn or opened
- Do not have any genital contact before you put the condom on

## For more information

- Contact the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or go to [www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline](http://www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline)
- NRS (for deaf) 133 677
- Or visit your nearest Family Planning clinic

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