CHOICES:

Condoms Work!!!

WHAT types of condoms are there for men?

Condoms are made of latex (often called "rubbers"), polyurethane (plastic), or natural membranes (often called "skins" and made from the intestine of sheep). Polyurethane condoms may be used by couples when either partner is allergic to latex. Condoms look like long thin balloons before they are blown up. Condoms act as a mechanical barrier; they prevent pregnancy by stopping sperm from going into the vagina. The condom is put onto the penis before the penis comes into contact with the vagina. Among typical couples who initiate use of latex condoms for men, about 14% will experience an accidental pregnancy in the first year. If condoms are used consistently and correctly, about 3% will become pregnant. Condoms become more effective in subsequent years of use (after the first year). Whether condoms lubricated with spermicides are more effective than other lubricated condoms in protecting against the transmission of HIV and other STDs has not been determined. *Complete information about condoms is available from your clinician or from the package insert.*

ADVANTAGES AND EFFECTIVE USE

- Condoms are safe and effective at preventing both pregnancy and infection when they are used during each act of sex. Sexual intercourse may be enjoyed more because there is less fear of STIs, HIV, and pregnancy.
- Men "last longer" when they use condoms. Prolonging sex may make sex more fun.
- Condoms come in many colors, sizes and with or without ribbing. Variety is exciting!
- Condoms make sex less messy by catching the semen.
- If the woman puts the condom on the man, it can be fun for both partners!
- Remember, penises and condoms come in different sizes! Find a condom that fits!
- If you use a water based lubricant such as Astroglide, KY Jelly or KY Jelly Plus Nonoxynol-9, you may decrease the chance that your condom will break.
- To decrease the chance of the condom slipping down the penis or falling off in the vagina, pull the penis out of the vagina right after ejaculation. Don't continue thrusting until the penis becomes soft.
- Hold the rim of the condom onto the shaft of the penis during withdrawal.
- Practice putting a condom onto a banana! This will make it easier to use condoms during sex.
- With condoms, the risk of infertility for partners is decreased.
- Condoms may reduce the risk of cervical cancer because there's less risk of HPV infection.
- Condoms make sex less messy by catching the ejaculate.
- There's no visit to a clinic or doctor's office required to start using condoms.
- Condoms are fairly easy to get and usually do not cost a lot. Costs may range from free at many clinics and HIV programs to several dollars for a designer condom.
- Condoms are a good contraceptive option during breast-feeding or with other methods as a backup.

DISADVANTAGES

- Unless the woman puts it on as a part of foreplay, the condom may interrupt sex.
- Condoms require some practice to learn how to use.
- When putting the condom on the penis you must avoid tearing the condom or putting a hole in it with finger nails, a ring or anything sharp. This includes anything sharp in the mouth!
- YOU CAN'T USE OIL BASED LUBRICANTS such as Vaseline, sun tan oil, whipped cream, or Crisco with latex condoms! These products can put a hole in a latex condom in a matter of seconds.
- Some men cannot maintain an erection with a condom on. This does not happen for most men.
- The man must pull out soon after ejaculation. If he becomes soft, the condom can fall off and be left in the vagina without the couple knowing that this has happened.
- Some people are sensitive (or allergic) to latex or find the smell very unpleasant. Natural membrane condoms (skins) are slightly less effective and more expensive than latex condoms. However, they may help if either the man or woman is sensitive to latex. Polyurethane (plastic) condoms, which include the Reality female condom and some types of male condoms, are another option if either partner is allergic to latex.
- Buying, negotiating use, putting on, and getting rid of condoms may be embarrassing for some people.
- Condoms create decreased enjoyment of sex for some couples by causing decreased sensation for either partner.
- Condoms may not be available when a couple needs one. Both partners must consider the responsibility of relying only upon condoms as their choice of contraceptive method.

WHERE DO I GET CONDOMS?

Condoms can be purchased at any drugstore and many supermarkets and gas stations. Some health departments and family planning clinics give away condoms. Check out www.condomania.com to see a colorful display of condom options for sale.

WHAT IF I HAVE SEX AND DON'T USE BIRTH CONTROL?

Did you know that for 72 hours after sex, you can take emergency contraceptive pills to avoid becoming pregnant? AND for 5 to 7 days after sex, you can have an IUD put in, so you won't become pregnant. Not all clinicians know about this. If you want more information or would like the phone numbers of clinicians near you that prescribe emergency birth control, call the toll-free number: (1-888) NOT-2-LATE or (1-800) 584-9911. Some of these sources of help are free. PLAN B is the emergency contraceptive pill that causes the least nausea, the least vomiting, and has the lowest failure rate.

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Previous next page

Managing Contraception for Women and Men, which may be ordered by calling (404) 373-0530.

managing contraception | choosing a contraceptive

Source: Bridging the Gap Foundation, Tiger, GA. Web site: www.managingcontraception.com.