

Condoms - how to use a male condom

condom-couple.jpg



FAST FACTS

- A condom is a thin piece of rubbery material that fits over a man's penis during sex, forming a barrier to protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, and unplanned pregnancy.
- A condom will protect you and your partner during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Put on a new condom if moving from one type of sex to another to avoid cross infection.
- Putting a condom on before any contact between the penis and a partner's genital area or mouth minimises risks to both of you.
- Using two condoms at the same time can cause them to break - one is enough!
- Using water-based lubricants makes condoms more comfortable and sex more enjoyable - but avoid oil-based lubricants with latex condoms as they can weaken or break them.
- It's very rare for a condom to break - but if it does, don't panic, there are things you can do to minimise the risk of STIs and pregnancy.

Using condoms consistently and correctly will help protect you from the risks of [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#), including [HIV](#), so you can have more enjoyable sex. They will also protect you from unplanned pregnancy during vaginal sex. Here you can find out how to use a male condom correctly and what to do if something goes wrong. You might also want to take a look at our [female condom](#) page for more information on how to use those.

What is a condom?

A condom is a thin piece of rubbery material that fits over a man's penis during sex. When used correctly, condoms prevent HIV, as well as pregnancy and most STIs. The most popular and common type of condom is made from a thin latex (rubber).

How do condoms work?

Sexual fluids such as semen, vaginal fluids and blood can pass on HIV and STIs. A condom forms a barrier between these fluids and entry points into the body, such as a person's:

- vagina
- anus
- penis (urethra)
- mouth (especially if there are large open sores or bleeding gums)

Although a few STIs can also be passed on through skin-to-skin contact (for example genital warts), condoms still cut the risk of many of these infections.

When should I use a condom?

You can use a condom to protect yourself and your partner from HIV and STIs:

- during vaginal, anal and oral sex
- every time you have sex
- when sharing sex toys (put a new condom on for each partner)

Putting a condom on before any contact between the penis and a partner's genital area or mouth minimises risks to both of you.

How to put on a condom

You'll find instructions on the condom packet, but here are a few simple steps:

1. Check the date on the condom hasn't passed. An out of date condom is more likely to break.
2. Check the packet is in good condition and has a certification mark (FDA, CE, ISO or Kitemark). This means it's been tested and complies with safety standards.
3. Open the packet carefully so you don't rip or damage the condom. There's usually an arrow on the packet to guide you in the direction you should open it. Avoid using your teeth or scissors and be careful with sharp fingernails or jewellery.
4. The penis needs to be erect before the condom is put on. Always put the condom on before the penis touches a woman or man's genitals or mouth.
5. Condoms come rolled up. Place one on top of the erect penis and pinch the teat at the end of the condom before you start to roll it down the penis. By doing this you'll squeeze out any air bubbles and ensure there is room for the semen (cum).
6. Roll the condom down to the base of the penis. If it's on correctly it will roll downwards easily. If you've started putting it on the wrong way or you're not sure then take it off and try again. Even if the man hasn't ejaculated (cum) there can still be semen on his penis (pre-cum), so it's important to try again with a new condom.

How to put on a **condom**

1



Check the expiry date & take the condom out of the packet carefully. Don't use scissors or your teeth!

2



Pinch the air out of the top of the condom. Make sure it is not inside out – the rim should be on the outside.

3



Put the condom on top of the erect penis. Put it on **BEFORE** it touches a partner's mouth or genital area.

4



Roll the condom down to the base of the penis. Wear it the whole time you are having sex.

5



Take the condom off once the penis has been withdrawn completely but while it is still erect. Don't wait around too long to pull out as this risks semen spilling out, or the condom slipping off.



Make putting on a condom part of the fun! Ask your partner to put it on for you, and keep stimulating each other as the condom goes on.

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How to remove a condom

1. Only take the condom off when the penis has been withdrawn completely but while the penis is still erect. Most men lose their erection very soon after they cum so don't wait around too long to pull out the penis from the vagina or anus, as this risks semen spilling out, or the condom slipping off.
2. Always use a new condom if you have sex again, or if you're going from anal to vaginal or oral sex. This is important because several different infections can be passed on from the anus to the vagina or mouth.

Top tips for using a condom

Make it part of the fun

Make putting on a condom a fun part of foreplay – keep touching and kissing as you put it on – you can also get your partner to put it on for you.

Don't double up

Using two condoms at once, or a female and a male condom at the same time, doesn't give you double protection – in fact it can cause friction and makes it more likely to split or slip off. One is enough!

Practice makes perfect

It's a great idea to practice putting on a condom a few times before you're actually in a situation where you're about to have sex. This can help you to feel more at ease when the time comes and get you used to the feel of the condom.

Love your lube

We love lubricant because:

- it makes using condoms feel more comfortable and increases pleasure during sex
- it reduces the risk of the condom breaking, especially during anal sex

Try putting lubricant on the outside of the condom or inside and around the vagina or anus. But don't put it on the inside of the condom or on your bare penis, as this will make the condom slip off. And remember to only use a water-based lubricant designed for sex. Oil-based lubricants (such as vaseline, massage oils or hand cream) may weaken or break latex condoms.

Size matters

Condom sizes vary. You can try out different sizes of condoms to find the one that's best for you or your partner. A well-fitting condom should roll all the way down to the base of the penis and feel comfortable rather than really tight. On the other hand it shouldn't feel too roomy and in danger of slipping off during sex. Keep in mind that, just like when you buy clothes, you might need a different size in different brands of condoms.

But don't worry, condoms are super stretchy, so you'll find one to fit - it's a myth that a penis can be too big for condoms. However, if you can't find a male condom which feels comfortable during sex then you could try a [female condom](#) for either vaginal or anal sex.

Try different textures and flavours

The good news is that there are a huge variety of condoms available. You have a choice of textures (ribs or bumps can increase sensation for both partners), thickness, flavours (which can make oral sex more fun) and colours - so try different options and find out which ones turn you and your partner on.

If you're sensitive to latex you can also use latex-free condoms made of polyurethane or polyisoprene instead. Female condoms are also latex-free, so you could try those instead.

What should I do if a condom breaks?

It's very rare for a condom to break if it has been put on and used correctly. But if a condom does split, break or slip off there are a few simple things you can do:

- withdraw the penis immediately
- remove as much semen (cum) as you can
- avoid washing inside your vagina or anus (douching) as this can spread infection further or cause irritation
- access emergency contraception if you're not using any other contraceptive.

Most sexual health professionals will advise you to have a sexual health test around 10 days after unprotected sex or if a condom breaks (or earlier if you're worried about any symptoms) and then again around three months later. This is because different STIs will become detectable at different times after infection.

What should I do if a condom breaks and my partner is HIV-positive?

Your HIV positive partner will be able to tell you if they are on regular treatment and have been virally suppressed for at least the last six months. If this is the case, the risk of HIV transmission if a condom breaks is extremely unlikely. You may however both still decide to get tested for other STIs.

If a condom breaks and your HIV positive partner is not on regular treatment or is unsure of how

well they are doing, you'll need to visit a sexual health professional as soon as you can. You may be offered [post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#) treatment. This is a month-long treatment of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) that reduce your chances of becoming HIV-positive.

PEP has a high success rate; however, it's not a replacement for condoms. PEP is a powerful drug that has side effects and it's not an option available to everyone.

If you're in a relationship with someone who is living with HIV, using [pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\)](#) could be another option to protect you from the risk of HIV transmission. However it won't protect you from other STIs and unplanned pregnancy.

How can I talk about condoms with my partner?

Some people feel embarrassed bringing up the subject of using condoms, especially in the early stages of a [relationship](#). But protecting yourself and your partner should be a priority for both of you. If your partner refuses to use a condom don't feel pressured into having unprotected sex - remember you always have the right to decide whether you want to have sex or not.

Talking about condoms with your partner isn't about you saying that you don't trust them - it's as much for them as it is for you. Knowing you are safe should help you both feel more at ease and mean you can get on with just enjoying sex.

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Sources:

[NHS Choices 'Condoms'](#)

[Planned parenthood 'How to put on a condom'](#)

[Terrence Higgins Trust \(THT\) 'Oral sex and HIV'](#)

[Terrence Higgins Trust \(THT\) \(2014\) 'Post exposure prophylaxis'](#)

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