

# CONDOMS & LUBRICANTS

Condoms and lubricants help to prevent HIV infection.

Find out how to use them consistently and correctly.

Follow us on    

We rely on donations to provide HIV and AIDS information worldwide [www.avert.org/donate](http://www.avert.org/donate)

Last review: 18/08/2014  
Next review: 18/02/2016

References: [www.avert.org/learn-share/hiv-fact-sheets/condoms-lubricants](http://www.avert.org/learn-share/hiv-fact-sheets/condoms-lubricants)



AVERTing HIV and AIDS

Charity no: 1074849



## What is a condom?

A condom is a thin piece of material that fits over a man's penis or inside a woman's vagina during sex.

It is the only method that protects against both pregnancy and sexual transmission of HIV or sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## How do condoms work?

Semen, vaginal fluids and blood can transmit HIV and STIs.

A condom forms a barrier between bodily fluids and entry points for HIV:



vagina



anus



penis  
(urethra)



mouth\*

\* but only if there are large open sores or bleeding gums.

## When should I use a condom?

Use a condom:

- before any penetrative sexual activities
- during vaginal and anal sex
- every time you have sex
- on shared sex toys. Put a new condom on for each partner.

## Condom types

There are two main types of condom.

**The male condom:**



The most common type of condom. Thinner than the female condom, it fits close to the penis.

**The female condom:**



Wider than the male condom, it fits inside the vagina or anus.

Use our 'How to use a female condom' infographic for information about using a female condom.

A dental dam is a sheet of latex that can be used for protection during oral sex. Or, try a flavoured condom cut open!

# Condom shapes and sizes

Condoms come in various shapes and sizes...



Standard condoms have straight sides.



Fitted condoms are indented below the head of the penis.



Large condoms are longer and wider giving more room.



Some condoms are wider over the head of the penis.



Extra strong condoms are thicker - important for anal sex.



Textured condoms, with ribs or bumps, can increase sensation for both partners.



Coloured or flavoured condoms can make oral sex more enjoyable.

# Using lubricants

Lubricant (or lube) is a water, silicone or oil-based substance.



Never use oil-based lubricants (e.g. massage oils or Vaseline) with latex condoms - they can break.

Many condoms are covered in some lubricant.

Use extra lubricant...

- ✓ To make using condoms more comfortable and fun.
- ✓ To reduce the risk of a condom breaking, especially during anal sex.
- ✓ On the outside of male & female condoms.
- ✓ Inside and around the vagina or anus.



Stimulating (e.g. warms or tingles) and flavoured lubricants are available.

# Condom and lubricant tips

You can get condoms and lubricant from...



Your doctor or healthcare provider.



A sexual health or government clinic.



Stores and pharmacies.



The Internet.

Some charities, healthcare clinics or gay bars provide free condoms.

If the condom breaks during sex...



Withdraw the penis immediately and use a new condom.



Access emergency contraception if not using other contraceptive methods.



Both partners should be tested for HIV and STIs.



Access emergency HIV treatment if you are at risk of HIV infection.

Allergic to latex condoms? Not all condoms are made of latex. Polyurethane, polyisoprene and nitrile condoms are also available.

# Condom effectiveness

Condoms are very effective at protecting against HIV, other STIs and pregnancy.



Remember...

- Use a new condom every time you have sex.
- Always use extra water-based lubricant during anal sex.
- Use certified condoms E.g. FDA, CE, ISO, Kitemark.
- Some STIs are transmitted by skin-to-skin contact - condoms cannot protect you from these.

# Know your rights

You have the right to:



insist on using a condom every time



refuse sex without a condom



use a new condom over shared sex toys.