

## What is a condom?

There are two types of condoms:

- external condoms (also known as male condoms) which are worn on the outside of a hard (erect) penis
- internal condoms (also known as female condoms) which are worn inside the vagina. They can also be used for anal sex

## What is an external condom?

The external condom is a thin, soft cover which goes over the penis. Most external condoms are made from latex rubber. Non-latex condoms are also available and are made from other materials like polyisoprene. These can be useful for those with allergies to latex.

Condoms are already lubricated (a slippery gel). You can add more water-based lubricant on the outside if needed. They also come in different sizes, brands, and flavours. Find the type that is comfortable and enjoyable for you and your partner.

## Why use a condom?

Condoms can stop pregnancy during vaginal sex. They can also help stop sexually transmitted infections (STIs) during vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

Condoms are the only method of contraception that help prevent both pregnancy and STIs.

## What are STIs?

STIs are infections which can be passed from one person to another during sex. This can happen through skin-to-skin contact and/or when body fluids (like semen or vaginal fluids) are shared.

You can put a condom on sex toys, especially if they are shared between people.

## How does the external condom work?

The condom catches the semen (cum; the fluid that contains sperm), so that the sperm cannot reach the womb (uterus). It also blocks body fluids like pre-cum, semen and vaginal fluids, which can carry infections.

You can only use a condom once. Throw them away after use.

## How do I use an external condom?

- put the condom on a hard (erect) penis before sex starts - the penis must be hard before putting on the condom or it will fall off
- place the condom on the tip of the penis while still holding the tip of the condom
- use your other hand to roll the condom all the way down to the base of the penis
- you can add water-based lubricant on the outside of the condom if you need, but do not use oil-based products because they can break the condom
- after sex, hold the condom at the base and carefully pull out before the penis becomes soft - this helps stop the condom from failing off or leaking
- take the condom off and tie a knot in the open end to keep the semen (cum) inside the condom.
- wrap the condom in a tissue or paper and put it in the bin - do not flush it down the toilet as it can block pipes

For condoms to work best, you must always:

- put the condom on correctly
- use a new condom every time you have sex
- keep it on the penis the whole time you are having penetrative sex
- take it off carefully so it doesn't leak or spill
- not use oil-based lubricants like baby oil or Vaseline as they can break the condom

There are several things that are important to do when using an external condom:

- check the expiry date on the packet - do not use a condom if it is out of date
- open the packet carefully (condoms are individually wrapped in packets) - do not use scissors or teeth and be gentle so the condom doesn't tear
- check which side is on the outside (it should look like a flat circle with a thick edge) - make sure the edge (rim) is rolled on the outside, like a little hat; this means it's ready to roll down properly
- squeeze the tip of the condom with your fingers - this will make space for the semen (cum); some condoms have a small tip or "nipple" shape for this purpose



### How well does the external condom work?

If used perfectly every time, they are 98% effective at preventing pregnancy. But in real life, they are 88% effective, because they can be used incorrectly or break.

Condoms also give the best protection against STIs. Condoms work better when they are used properly and when both partners are confident using them.

### Advantages and disadvantages of the external condom

#### Advantages

- safe and easy to use for short-term birth control
- protects against STIs
- you can buy them without a prescription
- easy to find – sold in many shops
- cheap or free in many places

#### Disadvantages

- they can fail if not used properly
- you can use each one once only

### Can I use condoms with other contraception?

Yes. You can use condoms together with other contraceptive methods like the Pill, contraceptive implant or an IUD (a small device placed inside the womb). If you use them together, it can help prevent pregnancy and STIs at the same time.

### What if the condoms break or slip off?

You can take the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) from a pharmacy. The ECP can help reduce the chance of getting pregnant. It works best if taken as soon as possible, but it can be used up to 5 days after unprotected sex.

If you may have been exposed to STIs, get STI testing.

If you think you are at risk of HIV, ask a doctor or clinic about PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis). PEP can lower the risk of getting HIV if taken soon after sex (within 72 hours).

### Are there any side effects?

Most people do not experience side effects. Some people are allergic to latex rubber or lubricant on the condom. You can use non-latex condoms if you or your partner are allergic to latex rubber.

If you or partner gets a rash or any discomfort, talk to your doctor or visit a Family Planning Australia clinic.

### Where can I get external condoms?

You can get condoms from Family Planning clinics, Freedom Condom, sexual health clinics, supermarkets, pharmacies, and online shops.

### For more information

- Visit your nearest Family Planning Australia clinic [fpnsw.org.au/clinics](https://fpnsw.org.au/clinics)
- Chat to a nurse via Talkline – 1300 658 886 or [fpnsw.org.au/talkline](https://fpnsw.org.au/talkline)
- National Relay Service (for people who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have speech communication difficulties) – 133 677
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) – 131 450
- Family Planning NSW client resource on contraception – What suits me? [fpnsw.org.au/health-information/contraception/contraception-options](https://fpnsw.org.au/health-information/contraception/contraception-options)
- Freedom Condom – Freedom condom (free condoms in many places) [freedomcondom.org.au](https://freedomcondom.org.au)