

## What is an internal condom?

There are two types of condoms:

- internal condoms (also called female condoms) are worn inside the vagina or anus
- external condoms (also called male condoms) are worn on the outside of the penis, or can be used with a sex toy

## Why use condoms?

Condoms are the only contraception that prevent both pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

## About internal condoms

The internal condom sold in Australia is called “FC2” (brand name). It is a thin, soft pouch made from nitrile (a type of rubber).

You can put an internal condom in the vagina before sex. It is 17 cm long and has two flexible rings, one at each end – the inner and outer ring. The inner ring is closed and sits deep inside the vagina. The outer ring is open and stays outside the vagina, resting on top of the vulva (entrance to the vagina). It lies flat against the labia, the folds of skin around the opening of the vagina (sometimes called ‘lips’). The outer ring helps hold the condom in place and stop it from being pushed inside the vagina during sex.

The internal condom can also be used for anal sex to help prevent STIs. When using it this way, the inner ring can be removed before inserting the condom into the anus. Then you can gently insert the condom into the anus, leaving outer ring outside the body.

Just like external condoms, each internal condom should only be used once. You should use a new condom every time you have sex.



## How does the internal condom work?

When used during vaginal sex, the internal condom covers the cervix (the opening to the womb), lines the vagina, and protects the vulva. It acts as a barrier between the penis and the vagina. This helps stop the exchange of body fluids like semen and vaginal fluids, which can cause infections or pregnancy.

The internal condom is already lubricated to make sex more comfortable. You can add more lubricant if you want to.

## Who can use the internal condom?

Most people can use the internal condom. It is designed to fit all body types.

## How effective is the internal condom?

The internal condom is at least as effective as the external condom at preventing STIs. When used correctly every time, it can prevent pregnancy up to 95% of the time. But in real life where mistakes can happen, it is around 79% effective.

You can use internal condoms together with most other methods of contraception like the contraceptive pill, vaginal ring, contraceptive injection, implant, or IUD. However, you should not use an internal condom with an external condom.

## Where can I buy the internal condom?

You can buy internal condoms online or from Family Planning Australia clinics. Some women’s health clinics and pharmacies also sell them.

## What if something goes wrong?

If you think your internal condom falls out, tears, or you forget to use one, and you might get pregnant, you can take the emergency contraceptive pill. This pill is available at pharmacies and works best if taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex. Please see our emergency contraception factsheet for more information.

If you may have been exposed to an STI, it is important to get STI testing. If you think you are at risk of HIV, a medicine called PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) can lower the risk of HIV transmission. You need to take PEP within 72 hours after unprotected sex.



## Advantages and disadvantages of internal condoms

### Advantages

- it is a safe, short-term method of contraception
- you can buy it without a prescription
- it can protect you and your partner against STIs
- you can insert it up to 8 hours before sex
- you can use any type of lubricant with it (water-based, silicone-based or oil-based)
- you can use it if you have a latex allergy or sensitivity.
- the material warms up easily to your body temperature, which may help sex more enjoyable
- the outer ring may rub the clitoris, making sex more pleasurable
- it lines the inside of the vagina or bottom (anus and rectum) so you don't need to wait for the penis to get hard, and you don't have to pull out straight away after ejaculation

### Disadvantages

- it is not as effective at preventing pregnancy compared with some other types of contraception
- some people find it difficult to insert or remove, especially when using it for the first time
- you might have trouble finding external condoms, as it is not as widely available as the external condom
- it is usually more expensive than the external condom

## How do I use the internal condom?

### To insert the internal condom in the vagina:

- hold the inner ring (the closed end of the condom) and squeeze the edges of this ring together
- push this end with the ring inside as far as possible into the vagina - when you let it go, the ring will open inside to hold the condom in place
- use your fingers to push the condom further inside the vagina
- let the outer ring stay outside the vagina, resting against the labia (the lips of the vagina entrance) to anchor the condom and prevent the condom from slipping inside
- check the condom is not twisted
- guide the penis through the outer ring and into the condom during sex

### To use the internal condom for anal sex:

- remove the inner ring of the internal condom and place it over the hard (erect) penis like an external condom OR
- insert the condom into the anus - you may remove the inner ring first if that feels more comfortable; the outer ring should stay outside the anus, to keep the condom in place
- guide the penis through the outer ring and into the condom
- use extra lubricant, because anal sex usually needs more than vaginal sex

### To remove the internal condom:

- after sex, twist the outer ring to keep the semen inside, then gently pull the internal condom out
- wrap it in tissue and put it in a rubbish bin.
- don't flush it down the toilet – it can block pipes

### Remember:

- make sure the outer ring stays outside the vagina (on the vulva) or anus during sex
- make sure the penis goes into the condom, not between the condom and the vagina or anus
- use the condom only once – always use a new one each time you have sex

## 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](https://www.nrelayservice.org.au/) (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)
- FC2 female condom website – [www.fc2femalecondom.com](https://www.fc2femalecondom.com)
- Play Safe: [playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/2021/04/01/the-complete-guide-to-the-internal-or-female-condom/\(to-learn-more-about-internal-condoms-and-safer-sex\)](https://playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/2021/04/01/the-complete-guide-to-the-internal-or-female-condom/(to-learn-more-about-internal-condoms-and-safer-sex))
- Aidsmap. Female condoms for anal sex: [www.aidsmap.com/about-hiv/female-condoms-anal-sex](https://www.aidsmap.com/about-hiv/female-condoms-anal-sex)