

## Condoms

A condom is a thin rubber sheath worn over an erect penis before penetration. It is used during sexual intercourse both as a barrier method of contraception and as protection against sexually transmitted infections. Besides not having sex at all, condoms are the most effective method for reducing the risk of infection from viruses that cause AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections.

Condoms provide a mechanical barrier so they prevent direct vaginal contact with semen, infectious genital secretions, genital sores and discharges.

Condoms are available in all pharmacies, supermarkets and vending machines placed near to places of entertainment. Here are a few points to remember:

### Buying and storing condoms

- Check that there is the European CE mark of safety standard printed on the pack.
- Check also the expiry date on the pack.
- Never use condoms that have an expired date.
- Condoms are damaged by heat, so store condoms in a cool dry place.
- If you are going on holiday, it is best if you take condoms with you.

### Using condoms

- You should put on the condom before there is any contact between the penis and the vagina, mouth or anus.
- Use a condom every time you have sex, unless you are in a stable, ongoing relationship with one partner and are trying to get pregnant. Use a new condom each and every time.
- Do not use two condoms together because they will rub against each other causing friction and can break more easily.
- You would need to use a water-based lubricant.
- You cannot use body lotion, moisturisers, massage oil, body oil or other oil based lubricants as this weakens the latex of the condom, making it less effective.
- After use, condoms are to be wrapped and thrown away.

### Wearing a condom

- Open the package carefully so that you do not tear the condom itself.
- Pull the foreskin of the penis back.
- Unroll the condom about 1 cm to see which way it is rolling.
- Put it on the penis; it should unroll easily.
- Roll the condom down as far as it will go.
- When you are finished, hold the condom while you are withdrawing
- Throw it away immediately when you are finished.

## Negotiating condom use

Some people may find it difficult to discuss the use of condoms with their partner. You need to evaluate your negotiating skills, and maybe make use of some of the tips outlined below, as they might save your life!

- Be clear that this is to protect both of you.
- Be assertive in your conversation about using condoms.
- Be prepared by having the condoms yourself and by having some answers ready.
- Be knowledgeable. By knowing the importance of safe sex, you show your partner that you are basing your decision on facts and not whims.
- Be understanding when your partner says you do not love me. Loving someone means caring for both your partner's and your own health so that you can enjoy a healthy sex life together.
- Be assertive and determined to refuse having penetrative sex if your partner does not want to use a condom. Never let anyone coerce you into doing something you do not want to do.

Some people may not like or may not want to use a condom during sex. If you respect yourself and your partner, you would take care of each other.

Remember, it is essential to wear a condom every time you have sex unless you are in a long term, stable relationship and are trying to get pregnant. It is recommended that another form of contraception is to be used as well to avoid unintended pregnancy.

For more information, call the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate on 23266000 or the GU Clinic at Boffa Hospital on Tel no

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