

**Ottawa County Department of Public Health
Family Planning Program**

MALE CONDOMS PATIENT INFORMATION

A male condom is a latex, polyurethane, polyisoprene or animal tissue sheath used to cover the penis and capture the semen during intercourse. Condoms are available in different materials, styles, and sizes with or without spermicidal coating. The spermicidal coating does not increase protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

In typical use, of 100 women whose partners use condoms, about 18 will become pregnant in the first year of use. Only 2 will become pregnant with consistent and correct use.

The latex male condom is the most effective method available to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in at-risk couples. It is thought that the polyurethane and polyisoprene condoms also provide the same level of protection against STIs. Condoms made of animal tissue (“natural” condoms) do not provide protection against STIs.

Condom failure may be reduced by selecting the correct size and by using additional water-based external lubricant or spermicide vaginally or on the outside of the condom.

To Increase Condom Effectiveness:

- Read and follow the instructions that come with the product you use – each one may have different directions.
- Use one every time you have sex and only use one condom once.
- Be sure to use lubrication to increase sensitivity and help prevent rips and tears.
- Use only lubricants that are recommended; typically water-soluble.
- With latex condoms, avoid petroleum-based lubricants and vaginal products such as antifungal or hormonal vaginal creams.
- Polyurethane and polyisoprene condoms are not biodegradable but are preferred if either partner has a latex allergy or if a woman is using a petroleum-based vaginal product.
- Avoid sunlight, heat, and humidity for storage of latex condoms.
- Open the package carefully to avoid tearing the condom.
- Place a new condom on penis before each sex act, before any genital contact and before entry into the partner’s body (mouth, vagina, rectum).
- Leave a half-inch space at the end of the condom to catch sperm and reduce the chance of the condom breaking. Be sure to withdraw the penis from the vagina, before the penis softens. Hold the rim of the condom against the penis during withdrawal to make sure the condom doesn’t slip off and spill into the vagina.
- Examine the condom after its removal from the penis to look for signs of breakage or spillage.
- Use two latex condoms if you or your partner has any visible lesions or if infection is suspected and abstinence is not possible.
- Do not place lubricant inside the condom.
- Do not use a male and a female condom at the same time. This will damage the product.
- If the condom breaks or spills or is not put on correctly, the woman should immediately place spermicidal foam in her vagina and/or consider using emergency contraception (available over-the-counter if 15 or older or call OCDPH as soon as possible).

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Advantages of Condoms:

- Condoms are inexpensive.
- Women and men of any age can buy them without a prescription.
- Condoms can be used during vaginal or anal intercourse and for oral sex.
- Condoms help decrease exposure to STIs.

Disadvantages to Condoms:

- Condoms have a higher failure rate than non-barrier methods such as the pill.

Condoms are not recommended for women and men who:

- Are unable to use them correctly every time they have intercourse.
- Are uncomfortable about touching their sex organs.
- Have allergies to latex, polyurethane, polyisoprene, animal tissue, nitrile, or spermicide coatings. Signs of allergy include:
 - Itching, burning, or swelling in areas touched by the condom or spermicide,
 - A rash or redness in areas touched by the condom or spermicide
- Rarely, a severe, overall body reaction to latex. Seek emergency care if you are having difficulty breathing, dizziness, chest tightness, hives.
- If you plan on using spermicides with condom use, please ask for our Vaginal Spermicides Patient Information to read the advantages and disadvantages of their use.

If you are experiencing non-emergent symptoms or have more questions after reading this information, please call us.