

Deciding when or even if to become a parent is one of the most important choices you will make — for you, for your partner, and for your future. Maybe you are having sex and don't want to have a baby right away. Maybe you want to learn about how to space your children in the future. Maybe you're just curious about contraception. The point is, contraceptive methods help you plan when you will become a parent. This brochure tells you about one of the methods, so you can choose the one — or two — that seem right for you.

These choices matter to both men and women. Although most contraceptive methods are used by women, men are just as involved. Contraception seems to work best when a man and woman choose a method together and use it together!


What you should know about:

THE MALE CONDOM



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Office of Public Health and Science
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What is it? A male condom is a latex, plastic, or “animal skin” sheath that covers the penis. It may be prelubricated and/or contain a spermicide.

How does it work? The male condom creates a barrier between the penis and the vagina. It collects and holds semen so that an egg and sperm do not meet and fertilization does not occur.

How is it used? The condom is unrolled over the erect penis before sex. The penis must be withdrawn from the vagina while it is still erect while the male holds the base of the condom in place. The condom is then removed from the penis and discarded without spilling the semen near the vagina. It cannot be reused.

How well does it work? A condom is 84% effective with typical use* and 97% effective with perfect use.** A condom can be up to 99% effective if it contains spermicide.

Does it reduce the risk for HIV/AIDS and STDs? Yes and no. A latex male condom reduces the risk for HIV/AIDS and most STDs. An “animal skin” condom does not.

What are its main advantages? The condom has no health risks or side effects (except possible allergy to the latex). The latex condom is the only currently approved contraceptive method that effectively reduces the risk of contracting or transmitting HIV/AIDS and STDs. It can be used with other contraceptive methods to increase effectiveness and protect against infection. It does not require a prescription and can be purchased at most drugstores. And it delays premature ejaculation.

What are some possible problems? A condom can slip off or break, causing leakage. Using a condom correctly can inhibit spontaneity and reduce sexual sensations. A latex condom can cause irritation, discomfort, and severe allergic reactions (in which case a plastic condom can be used). A latex condom should not be used with an oil-based lubricant.

* Typical Use Effectiveness—How well the method works for the average person.

** Perfect Use Effectiveness—How well the method works when used correctly all of the time.

