

Woman's Health Options

Condom (female)

What is a condom?

A female condom is a thin, loose-fitting and flexible plastic tube worn inside the vagina.

Does it work?

With perfect use 5 women out of every 100 will become pregnant. Condoms are effective if they are used consistently and correctly every time you have sexual intercourse.

With typical use 21 women out of every 100 will become pregnant. Typical use refers to the fact that many couples do not consistently and/or correctly use a condom.

The female condom may provide an extra measure of safety in prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that male condoms do not. This is due to the outer ring of the female condom that partially covers the external genitalia.

How is it used?

Female condoms can be inserted up to 8 hours before intercourse and is only effective when placed prior to intercourse. To insert the condom, squeeze the ring at the closed end of the tube. Use one hand to spread the outer lips, and insert the squeezed condom into the vaginal canal. The inner ring should be pushed just past the pubic bone and over the cervix. After insertion, make sure the condom is not twisted. About one inch of the open end will stay outside of the body. The man's penis will go inside the tube of the condom during intercourse. The outer ring of the female condom will need to be held in place during intercourse. After intercourse, squeeze and twist the outer ring to keep all fluids, including sperm, inside the condom. Gently pull it out and throw it away.

Availability

The female condom should be available in the pharmacy section of major retailers. There is only one brand of female condoms, it is called Avanti.

Further instructions and cautions

- Use a new condom every time you have intercourse.
- At first female condoms may be awkward to use, but will get easier with practice.
- Lubrication can help keep the condom in place and may lessen the noise during intercourse.
- Oil and water based lubricants will not decrease the effectiveness of the condom.

Do not use a condom if:

- The package is broken
- The condom is brittle or dried out
- The color is uneven or has changed
- The condom is past the expiration date
- The condom is unusually sticky.

Advantages

- Prevents the spread of STIs, including HIV and AIDS.
- The woman is actively participating in the use of the birth control.
- Protects the vagina and vulva.
- Does not reduce a male partner's stimulation.
- Available without a prescription
- Can be used by people with latex sensitivities.
- Does not interrupt sex play
- Erection is not necessary to keep condom in place.

Disadvantages

- Noticeable during sex
- Does not contain spermicide
- Can break or leak
- About three times more expensive than male condoms.

For more information call:

The Birth Control Centre	735-0010
Options Sexual Health Association	423-3737
Woman's Health Options	484-1124
STD Clinic	413-5156

Websites

Canadians Women's Health Network: www.cwhn.ca
Sexuality and You: www.sexualityandu.ca

Adapted from: Cedar River clinics: www.CedarRiverClinics.org