

# Condoms (male)

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**Condoms are barrier methods of contraception. They stop sperm meeting an egg.**

A male condom is made of very thin latex (rubber), polyurethane (plastic) or polyisoprene (synthetic rubber). It fits over a man's erect penis.

Male condoms made from lambskin are also available. These do not help protect you against sexually transmitted infections and **the information below does not currently apply to them.**

## Effectiveness

- Perfect use: If male condoms are **always** used according to instructions they are 98 per cent effective. This means that two women in 100 will get pregnant in a year.
- Typical use: If male condoms are **not always** used according to instructions, about 18 in 100 women will get pregnant in a year.

## Who can use them?

- Male condoms are suitable for most people.
- Some people are sensitive to the latex in male condoms. If this is a problem you can use non-latex male condoms or female condoms.
- Men who do not always keep their erection during sex may find it difficult to use a male condom.
- Women who have just had a baby can use condoms at any time after the birth. Using an additional lubricant can help to make sex more comfortable.

## How they work

- A male condom is put over the erect penis and stops sperm from entering the vagina.
- Put the condom on when the penis is fully erect and before it touches the vagina or genital area.
- Use a new condom each time you have sex and follow the instructions carefully.

## Advantages

- Available free from contraception and sexual health clinics and young people's services, and some general practices and GUM clinic.
- Sold from a wide range of places.
- They can help protect you from sexually transmitted infections.
- Additional spermicide not needed or recommended.

## Disadvantages

- May slip off or split if not used correctly or if the wrong size or shape.
- Man needs to withdraw as soon as he has ejaculated and before the penis goes soft, being careful not to spill any semen.

## Risks

- No serious risks or side effects.

## Other things to know

- Oil-based products (such as body lotions, petroleum jelly or oil-based lubricants) can damage latex and polyisoprene condoms, making them more likely to break.
- Oil-based lubricants can be used with polyurethane condoms. Water-based lubricants can be used with all types of condoms.
- Available in different shapes and sizes – it's important to use the right size.

For lots more information about male condoms go to [www.fpa.org.uk/condoms](http://www.fpa.org.uk/condoms)

**All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method.**

This booklet can only give you general information. The information is based on evidence-guided research from the World Health Organisation and The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Remember - contact your doctor, practice nurse or a sexual health clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.

## Useful information

- Get information about contraception and sexual health at [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)
- Get information for young people under 25 at [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)
- Find your closest contraception or sexual health clinic at [www.fpa.org.uk/clinics](http://www.fpa.org.uk/clinics)
- Find a GP or pharmacy at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) (England), [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk) (Wales), [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com) (Scotland) and [www.hscni.net](http://www.hscni.net) (Northern Ireland).

## Emergency contraception

If you have had sex without contraception, or think your method might have failed there are different types of emergency contraception you can use.

An emergency contraceptive pill containing levonorgestrel – can be taken up to three days (72 hours) after sex. More effective the earlier it is taken after sex. Available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. There are different brands but they all work the same way.

An emergency contraceptive pill containing ulipristal acetate – can be taken up to five days (120 hours) after sex. Available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. EllaOne is the only brand in the UK.

An IUD – can be fitted up to five days after sex, or up to five days after the earliest time you could have released an egg (ovulation).

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about getting emergency pills in advance, just in case you need them.

## **Sexually transmitted infections**

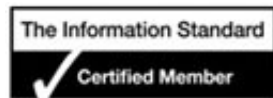
Most methods of contraception do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections.

Male and female condoms, when used correctly and consistently, can help protect against sexually transmitted infections. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms. The spermicide commonly contains a chemical called Nonoxinol 9, which may increase the risk of HIV infection.

**INFORMATION LAST UPDATED JANUARY 2016. NEXT PLANNED REVIEW FEBRUARY/MARCH 2018.**

**More information about condoms at [www.fpa.org.uk/condoms](http://www.fpa.org.uk/condoms)**

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