

Women's Health

Condoms

The best condoms to use are made of latex. A recent study (1987-1991) by the CDC found that with consistent, proper use of condoms in 123 serodiscordant couples (one partner who is HIV positive, and one who is HIV negative), there was no transmission of HIV. In the control group of 122 individuals who were inconsistent in condom use, twelve individuals became infected.

Proper use means the condom is put on an erect penis before any semen escapes.

A condom being used as a dental dam for oral or anal sex should be cut up the side and placed over the receiving partner's genital area.

Do NOT use condoms without an expiration date, or beyond an expiration date. Condoms should be kept in a cool, dry place. Condoms with clear packaging should be kept out of the sunlight.

When buying condoms, consider condoms with a lubricant. Recent literature from the CDC indicates that the role of spermicides in preventing HIV is uncertain. Earlier laboratory studies indicated that the spermicide nonoxynol 9 helped to kill HIV. Spermicides in conjunction with condoms are still effective in pregnancy prevention, however some women are irritated by nonoxynol 9. If that is the case, using it may increase your risk of exposure to HIV or another STI because of the irritation to the vaginal mucosa.

Use condoms with a plain lubricant. NEVER use oil based lubricants such as Vaseline or massage oil with a latex product, as it causes deterioration of the latex. Water based lubricants such as KY jelly and Astroglide, are fine.

A female condom is on the market. You can buy it at your local drugstore. Laboratory studies indicate that the female condom is an effective mechanical barrier to viruses, including HIV. No clinical studies on humans have yet been done to define clinical effectiveness.