



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Internal and External Condoms



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Internal and External Condoms

- A condom is a birth control device that prevents semen (the fluid that contains sperm) from entering a vagina or an anus. When semen is released inside a vagina, it may reach an egg and fertilize it, causing pregnancy.
- When a condom is used correctly, it may help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.
- There are 2 types of condoms:
  - › **Internal** (worn on the inside of the vagina)
  - › **External** (worn on the outside of an erect [hard] penis).

**Using a condom makes sex safer for both you and your partner.**

## What is an internal condom?

- An internal condom is made of a lubricated (slippery) nitrile polymer (rubber) sheath with 2 flexible rings.
- An internal condom is used during receptive penetrative sex (vaginal sex). The person receiving penetration wears the internal condom.

- One ring fits inside the vagina and the other ring stays outside.
- **You can only use an internal condom 1 time and then you must throw it away.**
- **Do not** use internal and external condoms at the same time. This can make the condoms break.

## How does an internal condom work?

- An internal condom catches semen and prevents it from being released inside the vagina.



Squeeze together the sides of the inner ring at the closed end of the condom.



Slide the condom in like a tampon. Push the inner ring into your vagina as far as it can go, up to your cervix.

## How well does an internal condom work to prevent pregnancy?

- An internal condom is about 75 to 95% effective in preventing pregnancy **if used correctly every time you have sex**. An internal condom is more effective at preventing pregnancy if used with a spermicidal foam or film.

## What is an external condom?

- An external condom is a thin cover worn over an erect penis. It may be made of latex, lambskin, or polyurethane.

## How does an external condom work?

- An external condom catches semen and prevents it from being released inside the vagina or anus.

## How well does an external condom work to prevent pregnancy?

- An external condom is about 87 to 98% effective in preventing pregnancy **if used correctly every time you have sex**. An external condom is more effective at preventing pregnancy if used with a spermicidal foam or film.

## **Benefits (pros) of an external condom:**

- You do not need a prescription.
- There are no side effects.
- It is small and easy to carry.
- Latex and polyurethane condoms protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, if used properly.
- It may be used with other forms of birth control.
- They are not expensive and are easy to find in drugstores and grocery stores.

## **Drawbacks (cons) of an external condom:**

- You must use a new condom each time you have sex.
- It may break, leak, or fall off. This can cause sperm to leak out when taking off the condom.
- It may lower sensitivity (how much you feel) during sex.
- You cannot use latex condoms if you have a latex allergy.
- You cannot use lambskin condoms if you have a lanolin sensitivity.
- It may not protect against genital warts (human papilloma virus [HPV]) or herpes.
- Some people may be sensitive to the lubricant (“lube”) used on some condoms, and may get a rash or irritation.

## Tips when using an external condom

- Store condoms at room temperature in a dry location in the original package.
  - › Store the package away from heat and light. Condoms may get damaged if kept in a wallet or pocket.
- **Do not** use oil-based lubricants. These break down rubber. Only use water-based or silicone-based lubricants.
- Check the expiry date on the package.

## How do I use an external condom?

**Important: Place the condom over an erect penis before sexual contact (including oral sex). This will help to prevent STIs.**

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Open the package carefully. Try not to tear the condom when opening the condom. **Do not** use your teeth.
- You may put lube inside the condom, on the penis, or on the outside of the condom. This helps to prevent irritation.
- Place the opened end of the condom over the erect penis.
- Press or squeeze the tip of the condom between your fingers to prevent breakage.

- Unroll the condom over the entire length of the penis. If the condom does not unroll to the base of the penis, it is not on correctly. Remove the condom and use a new one.
- Smooth out any air bubbles.
- After sex, hold the condom at the base of the penis to prevent it from slipping or leaking. Then **withdraw the penis while it is still erect.**
- Throw the condom in the garbage. **Do not** put condoms in the toilet.
- **Do not** use a condom more than once.

## **What should I do if the condom breaks during vaginal sex?**

- To prevent pregnancy:
  - › Put a spermicidal foam or film inside the vagina right away, if available.
  - › Consider taking emergency contraception (the morning after pill). It is available at pharmacies without a prescription.

## **What should I do if my partner does not want to use a condom?**

- Some people do not want to use condoms. **It is important to talk with your partner about your feelings about pregnancy and STIs before you have sex.** You can choose to be abstinent (not have sex) until you and your partner both agree.

# For more information on sexual and reproductive health, visit:

› [www.sexandu.ca](http://www.sexandu.ca)

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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