

Condom facts

- Using latex condoms or femidoms are proven to reduce your risk of catching a sexually transmitted infection (chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, Herpes simplex) and HIV in both men and women.
- Condoms used to prevent pregnancy have a failure rate of up to 15% with typical use - so it may be best to use an additional method of contraception such as a Long acting contraception method
- Non latex condoms are recommended for people with latex allergies e.g Avanti
- Thicker condoms are not safer and have similar rates of breakages to thin ones.
- The most common reason for condom breakage is failing to expel air from the tip or using a condom that does not fit properly.

Condom tips

- Choose condoms with a British Kite mark or European CE mark, a recognised safety and quality mark and make sure they are in date.



- Always put the condom on before you start having penetrative sex (when penis enters vagina or anus).
- Use a new condom every time you have sex.
- If you are having a long sex session, change your condom after 30 minutes because friction may lead to condom breakage.
- Never use two condoms together and never use a condom and femidom together as they will almost certainly break.
- Some condoms are designed for oral sex – they come in a range of flavours – but they are not suitable for vaginal or anal sex as they may irritate the lining of the vagina or rectum.
- Condoms come in a range of sizes, shapes, lengths and thickness so ask the clinic nurse to show you what's available and experiment to find what suits you!

Advice on lube or lubricants

- Most condoms are already lubricated and additional lube may not be needed for some couples.
- For anal sex additional lube is definitely recommended as this will prevent condom breakage as well as trauma to the delicate lining of the rectum. Trauma increases the risk of STI/HIV transmission.
- Lubricant may be either
 - water based e.g. KY jelly, Wet Stuff, Astroglide, Pasante tlc lube or Sensilube



- Silicone based e.g. Eros, ID Millenium – these lubes feel more slippery for longer but they can damage silicone sex toys and stain clothes or bedding.
 - **DON'T use oil based lubricants** as they weaken latex condoms leading to breakage. This includes skin cream, Vaseline, massage oil, baby oil etc.
 - Oil based lubricants **are** safe to use with femidoms or Avanti condoms as they are made from polyurethane.
- Apply lube to the condom covered penis or around the vagina or anus.
 - Avoid getting lubricant onto the penis before putting the condom on – this makes it less likely to slip off.
 - Apply more lube during sex if it starts to feel dry to reduce the risk of the condom breaking and don't rely on spittle – it dries quickly, causing condoms to break.

How to choose which condom will suit you best.

Condoms come in all different shapes and sizes – just like people. Below is some information to help you choose.
 NB All these products will not be available at Isis clinics, but can be purchased at your local pharmacy.

Latex or polyisoprene?

Most condoms are made of latex (a kind of rubber). Some brands are made of polyisoprene (a man-made rubber).

Advantages of polyisoprene condoms:

- Useful for people allergic to latex
- Can be used with oil based lubricants
- Softer – some people find them more comfortable

Disadvantages include:

- More expensive
- Not sold in the many places or varieties that latex condoms are

Examples of polyisoprene condoms:

Avanti ultima (Durex)



Unique (Persante)



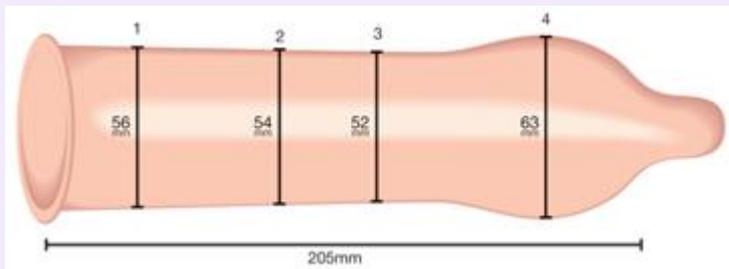
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Smaller or bigger?

Penises come in different sizes; so do condoms. There's a 1.5cm difference between the smallest and largest condom. Too small and a condom feels too tight and can split; too big and it's more likely to come off.

Condoms come in different shapes too- some are wider at the top for a better fit.

Durex easy-on shape



Widened opening makes application easier

Tapered shaft for easier unrolling

Bulbous end give tip of penis additional comfort



These are all shaped condoms or 'easy fit' so flared at top, providing greater comfort for most men.

Shop around for the best fit. Smaller condoms are labelled 'trim' or 'snug fit', larger ones 'XL', 'XXL' or 'Magnum'. Not all shops sell different sizes – the internet has the biggest selection.

Trim or snugger fitting



Larger or longer condoms



Regular strength or thicker?

The thinner the condom, the more sensation. For more reassurance some people prefer thicker condoms (sometimes called 'extra strong' or 'ultra strong'). These were once recommended for anal sex but we now know that regular (thinner) condoms are just as safe.



Fine

Slightly thicker



With or without spermicide?

Condoms often come covered in 'spermicide' (something that kills sperm). One spermicide called Nonoxynol 9 (or N-9) irritates the skin inside the body, making it easier to pick up infections (including HIV). A condom with Nonoxynol-9 is better than no condom but where possible it should be avoided (the packaging says if condoms contain it).

Standard or novelty condoms?



Condom with stimulating rib and dot texture



Condom with minty lubricant to give a tingling sensation



Condom with lubricant that gives a warming sensation



Flavoured condoms for oral sex (orange, banana, strawberry and kiwi)

Condoms come shaped, coloured, flavoured, with or without teats at the tip to collect semen. All these are usually OK for sex but some novelty condoms may not be. In general you should not use flavoured condoms for vaginal or anal sex as they are not lubricated and may irritate the delicate lining of the vagina or rectum.

'Male' or 'female' condoms?

Regular ('male') condoms rely on men being prepared to use them but 'female' condoms or femidoms give control to the woman.



Advantages of femidoms:

- The woman is in charge. She puts it inside her vagina before sex, possibly some time before.
- Men might prefer them because it means they don't have to wear a latex condom.
- Some gay men find them good to use for anal sex.

Disadvantages of femidoms:

- More expensive than male condoms but free in Isis clinics.
- Some say they are too noticeable or more likely to break.

Where to get your condoms?

You can buy condoms from:

- Pharmacies.
- Supermarkets.
- Late night shops and garages.
- Vending machines in bars and clubs.

It's always worth packing condoms for foreign holidays too - where you're going it might be difficult to access them, or their safety standards might be lower.