
Contraception - condoms for women

Summary

- Female condoms act as a barrier method of contraception.
 - Other barrier methods include male condoms and diaphragms.
 - Female condoms prevent sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
 - Female condoms can only be used once.
 - Female condoms are most effective if they are used correctly every time
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What is a female condom?

A female condom is a soft pouch made of nitrile and polyurethane. It has flexible rings at each end, and one end is closed. It is inserted into the vagina or anus before having sex.

How effective are female condoms?

If used correctly, every time you have sex, female condoms are 95 per cent effective at preventing pregnancy. Given mistakes might happen, such as incorrect use or slippage, it might only be 79 per cent effective.

What stops female condoms from working?

Female condoms might not work if they are:

- used incorrectly
- past their use-by date
- torn when opening the packet.

How do I use a female condom?

Always check the use-by date first. If the condom is within the use-by period, squeeze the closed-end of the condom and insert the condom into the vagina. The opening of the condom spreads outside the vagina.

There are instructions on each pack. You can use female condoms with water, oil or silicone-based lubricants (lube). Lube is a jelly- or liquid-like material.

Guide the penis inside the condom as it can sometimes slip under the condom. If the penis slips under the condom, there is no protection from pregnancy or STIs. If the condom slips or bunches up when the penis goes inside, use more lubricant.

Only use a condom once and throw it away into a bin (not down the toilet). To avoid pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections, put the condom on before the penis touches the vagina or anus.

How does a female condom work?

The condom works by preventing ejaculate (cum) from entering the vagina or anus. It can prevent both pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). The condom also protects the penis from STIs. Use a new condom every time you have sex.

Where can I get female condoms?

Female condoms can be difficult to get and are expensive. They may be available at family planning clinics, sex shops, some pharmacies and online.

What is good about female condoms?

Female condoms:

- protect against sexually transmissible infections (STIs)
- are easy to use
- have little or no side effects
- can be bought without a script
- can be used with any type of lubrication
- can be inserted hours before having sex.

Are there any side effects from using female condoms?

They can occasionally cause irritation of the vagina, penis or anus.

Can female condoms cause any serious health problems?

There are no known serious health risks from using female condoms.

When are female condoms not a good option?

Female condoms might not be a good option if cost is an issue (they are around \$3 each).

What if I forget to use a female condom?

You may need emergency contraception if you forget to use a condom or other contraception. (Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).

What happens if I get pregnant while I'm using female condoms?

If you get pregnant while using female condoms, it is safe to continue the pregnancy or to have an abortion.

Can I use female condoms after I've had a baby?

You can use condoms any time after giving birth.

What else should I know about female condoms?

After using a female condom, wrap the used condom in tissue and put it in the bin. Do not flush condoms down the toilet.

Where to get help

- Pharmacist
- **Family Planning Victoria** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages Tel. **1800 013 952** or **(03) 9257 0100**
- **Family Planning Victoria Action Centre** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages, with an afternoon drop-in clinic for people under 25 years of age Tel. **(03) 9660 4700** or **1800 013 952**
- **1800 my options (1800 696 784)** can provide information on the phone about contraception services
- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Many community health services and some public hospitals will have a family planning clinic, a sexual health clinic or a women's health clinic providing contraception
- Private clinics offering abortion also offer contraceptive services
- **Melbourne Sexual Health Centre** Tel. **(03) 9341 6200** or **1800 032 017**

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Family Planning Victoria

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