

Barrier methods. Male condoms

What are condoms and what are they for?

Condoms are plastic, pouch-shaped sheaths. The male condom fits on the penis and the female condom fits inside the vagina. You put one on before having sex to avoid direct contact with sexual fluids.

Wearing a condom is **the only method that both prevents unwanted pregnancy and protects you from catching sexually transmitted diseases** (hepatitis, syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and AIDS, among others). Condoms also protect you from human papillomavirus and consequently reduce the risk of getting cervical cancer. They are the most advisable method of contraception.

Are they effective?

Condoms are 99% effective. They should be kept in a cool, dry place and should not be subjected to friction. Check the expiry date before using them.

The correct, consistent use of condoms is not only a matter of information but of education.

Very often, the reasons for not using condoms are caused by gender patterns. We need to overcome the traditional power relationship between men and women, which sometimes hinders negotiation about the use of condoms during sex. Fortunately, new generations of more empowered women and more equally-minded men are challenging this way of thinking and condoms are being used more and more.

Men that have sex with other men should wear condoms.

The partner who is penetrated, regardless of which part of the body is involved, is the one most at risk of catching a sexually transmitted disease: ask your partner to use a condom.

You should also avoid taking drugs and stimulants before having sex, because they could make you lose control and end up having unprotected sex.

How do you put on a male condom?

Open the package carefully to avoid tearing the plastic. Do not use your nails or teeth. Take hold of the tip of the condom with your fingers to make sure that no air gets trapped inside it. Place it over the glans and unroll it over the shaft of your erect penis, right to the base. To take it off, hold it at the bottom. Once it is off, check that it has not torn, tie it with a knot and throw it away in the trash. Use a new condom every time that you have sex.

