



Safer sex uses barriers to reduce the risk of blood or body fluids entering the body. The most common barrier used is the male condom. Barriers should be used during all sexual contact. These barriers include: male condoms, female condoms, dental dams and other barriers



Safer Sex

Why have safer sex?

Safer sex can reduce your exposure to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). STDs are spread by sexual contact with an infected person. This occurs through vaginal, anal or oral sex, and genital touching. Having safer sex is one of the best ways to protect yourself from STDs. The only way sure way of avoiding STDs is to not have any sexual contact.

How are barriers used?

- ▶ Use each time you have sex. They can be made of plastic or latex and protect against viral and bacterial STDs. Use for:
 - Vaginal sex.
 - Anal sex.
 - Oral sex.
- ▶ Talk to your partner about using barriers before sex.
- ▶ Know that alcohol and drugs can alter how you think about if, when, or how to use barriers.
- ▶ Agree what type to use: male or female condoms, dental dams or other barriers.
 - Make sure to have these on hand if there is any chance you may have sex.

Male Condoms

- ▶ Use for oral, anal or vaginal sex.
- ▶ Choose lubricated latex condoms:
 - “Lambskin” condoms do not block HIV or other STDs.
 - If you have allergies to latex, choose polyurethane (plastic) condoms.
- ▶ Use before date expires.
- ▶ Store in a cool, dry place.
- ▶ Use a new condom for each sex act, from start to finish.
- ▶ Make sure there are no holes in the package.
- ▶ Check the condom for rips or signs of damage like brittleness or stickiness.
- ▶ Place the condom only on the erect penis.
- ▶ Hold onto the tip as you unroll it down the penis shaft.
- ▶ Use a water-soluble lubricant (e.g., ID Glide, K-Y Jelly, Slippery Stuff, Foreplay, Wet, and Astroglide) after it is on. This prevents the condom from breaking.
 - Do not use petroleum jelly, massage oils, mineral oil, cooking oil, body lotions, butter, Crisco, Vaseline, or hand creams as lubricant. These can weaken condoms.
- ▶ Remove the condom after ejaculation, but before the penis gets soft. Avoid spilling ejaculate.
- ▶ If it breaks, remove it. Put on a new one.
- ▶ Use on sex toys such as dildos or vibrators that are shared:
 - Use new ones for each partner.
 - Clean sex toys after each use.

Condoms kept in a wallet, stored somewhere warm, or that have been washed in the washer should not be used.

Female Condoms

- ▶ Use during vaginal sex.
- ▶ Note its shape is not like the male condom.
- ▶ Made of a plastic called polyurethane.
- ▶ Use before the expiration date.
- ▶ Store in a cool, dry place.
- ▶ Use a new one for each sex act, from start to finish.
- ▶ Make sure there are no holes in the package.
- ▶ Check the condom for rips or signs of damage like brittleness or stickiness.
- ▶ Put on lubricant before inserting the condom.
 - Female condoms are already lubricated.
 - Water or oil-based lubes can be used.
 - Put lube on the inside and outside of the condom.
- ▶ Put it in the vagina no more than eight hours before having sex and before the start of any sexual contact.
- ▶ Squeeze the ring of the closed end and insert into the back of the vagina. Keep the open end outside of the vagina, covering the lip area.
- ▶ If the outer ring slips into the vagina, or if the penis goes outside of the condom pouch, remove and replace it.
- ▶ After sex, remove it by twisting the outside ring to trap any fluid before standing up. Throw it in the trash.



Both male and female condoms can be found without co-pay at the VA pharmacy.

Dental Dams

Dental dams are a square piece of latex (rubber) found at surgical supply stores. Use dental dams for vaginal or anal contact during oral sex.

Other Barriers

Other barriers listed below can also be used to make oral sex safer. These work by reducing contact between blood or fluids and the mouth. Place over the opening to the vagina or anus During oral sex.

- ▶ A natural latex sheet.
- ▶ A “cut open” male condom.
- ▶ Plastic cling wrap (may be safe but has not been proven).

Learn more:

Veterans Health Library:

Safer Sex

http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,41502_VA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Condom Fact Sheet In Brief

www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/brief.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office on Women's Health:

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) fact sheet

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/mens-health/sexual-health-for-men/sexually-transmitted-infections.html>

U.S. National Library of Medicine:

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<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001949.htm>