



Why use contraception?

If you don't want to get pregnant, you need to use contraception.

Every month your ovaries produce an egg. The semen that is released when a man ejaculates contains millions of sperm. It takes only one of these sperm to fertilise one of your eggs to begin a pregnancy. Using contraception reduces your risk of getting pregnant when you have sex.

A condom is always a good idea

No matter what contraception you choose, you still need a condom to protect you from sexually transmitted infections.

In Australia, there are more than 20,000 new sexually transmitted infections every year. One of the most common is chlamydia, which can lead to infertility if left untreated. A condom is your best protection against infections. If you use a condom with a water-based lubricant every time you have sex you will have less chance of getting HIV/AIDS and many other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Other contraception will not protect you against sexually transmitted infections.

The male condom

The male condom is a fine rubber (latex) or synthetic sheath that is worn on an erect (stiff) penis. It collects the sperm and stops them entering the vagina and uterus.



How well does it work?

Condoms are 98 per cent effective with perfect use. Two in ten women (18 per cent) will still get pregnant using condoms, generally because the condoms are not used properly. Condoms are not as effective as the Pill, IUD (Intra Uterine Device), DMPA (Depo Provera or Depo Ralovera) or the Contraceptive Skin Implant.

You must use a new one every time you have sex and take care to put it on and take it off correctly. A water-based lubricant should be used every time you use a condom as this reduces the risk of the condom breaking. Condoms are for single use only.

Side effects

None, unless you or your partner are allergic to latex rubber or to the lubricant. Allergies to synthetic condoms are extremely rare.

Advantages

- Reduces the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.
- No need to see a doctor to get them.

Disadvantages

The material used in male condoms is perishable so they need to be kept in a cool place and used before the expiry date. Oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly and massage oil should not be used with latex rubber condoms since these products increase the risk of the condom breaking.

The female condom

The female condom is a pre-lubricated sheath that fits loosely into the vagina. A soft removable ring helps to insert it as well as keeping the condom in place. A large flexible ring remains on the outside of the vagina, covering the opening of the vagina (vulva), providing added protection.

Female condoms are 95 per cent effective with perfect use. Approximately two in ten women (20 per cent) will still get pregnant using a female condom, usually because the condom is not used properly.

They are made of polyurethane and are pre-lubricated with a silicone-based lubricant. Oil-based lubricant can be used with the female condom. Condoms are for single use only; you must use a new one every time you have sex. The female condom cannot be used with a male condom because this can cause it to move out of place.

Side effects

None, unless you are allergic to polyurethane or the lubricant. This is very rare.

Advantages

- Can be inserted before sex and does not need to be removed immediately after intercourse.
- Reduces the risk of pregnancy and STIs.
- No need to see a doctor to get them.

Diaphragms

These are soft silicone caps worn inside the vagina to cover the cervix (the entrance to the uterus). They prevent the sperm entering the uterus.



How well they work

For a diaphragm to work it needs to fit properly, to be put in correctly and to be used every time you have sex. They are 94 per cent effective with perfect use. But most often they are not used perfectly and therefore around one in ten women (12 per cent) will still get pregnant.

Advantages

- Used only when you have sex and do not affect the body the rest of the time.
- Can be used when a woman has her period (menstruation).
- Are washed and used again, lasting one to two years.

Disadvantages

- You have to put them in before you have sex (they can be inserted up to 24 hours before) and remove them after six hours.
- Some women may find them difficult to insert.
- Do not prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Where to get more information

- Your local doctor (GP)
- Your local pharmacist
- Nurse on Call – 1300 60 60 24
- **Women's Health Information Centre** (Victoria only)
Royal Women's Hospital
Tel: (03) 8345 3045 or 1800 442 007 (rural callers)
Email: whic@thewomens.org.au

Related fact sheets

- Contraception – Your Choices
- Contraceptive implants
- The Pill
- Depo Provera – a contraceptive injection
- IUD (Intra Uterine Device)

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