



CONDOMS: EFFECTIVE FOR PREVENTING PREGNANCY

Condoms are the most popular form of birth control in Canada¹ and it is easy to see why. If condoms are used properly every time during vaginal intercourse, they are a highly effective method of birth control; although no contraception can provide 100% effectiveness. Condoms are easy to get and easy to use, plus they don't cost as much as many other contraceptive methods. It is always important to follow the directions on the package to ensure you are using a condom correctly.

If you are having sex, consistently using condoms is also an effective way to significantly reduce your risk of becoming infected with a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI).

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONDOM FOR YOU (AND YOUR PARTNER)

Most condoms will fit most men. But as a regular condom user it's a good idea to find one that you like best.

Like a good pair of jeans, finding a condom that's a good fit is important. Fortunately, because latex condoms are quite flexible and are designed to be "form-fitting", fit is not a problem in most cases. But if you or your partner are particular about fit, there are many different shapes and sizes to choose from.

Condoms come in different shapes, sizes, textures and colours with a variety of different lubricants for enhanced sensation. If you want, you can even use them with products like Vibrating Rings which provide a little extra sensation for her.

You definitely want to choose a condom that's made with high quality materials that effectively block sperm and STIs which means it needs to be made of materials like latex or polyurethane. Most people are familiar with latex condoms so if you haven't seen or touched a polyurethane condom, check it out. The material is not quite as flexible as latex, but polyurethane is thinner and transfers heat more easily.

If you have an allergy to latex, and lots of people do, then polyurethane condoms which are made from a completely different material are an alternate option.

A quick trip to the store and you will find a virtual buffet of different types of condoms. If you're just starting a relationship, take your partner along. Or pick up a few different kinds and have some fun road testing them until you find the one that's just right for the two of you.

For more information visit
www.weknowsex.ca

ARE CONDOMS FOR ME?

Preventing Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)




TROJAN
CONDOMS

CONDOMS AND STI PREVENTION

Most cases of STIs have no symptoms so it is easy for people to bring an STI with them into a new relationship. These infections can have some serious implications for your health and well-being so this is something you should definitely pay attention to.

Sexually transmitted infections such as Human Papillomavirus (HPV), genital herpes (HSV-2) and Chlamydia are very common.

For example:

- Research indicates that up to 40% of sexually active young women may be infected with an STI by age 19²
- In the first six months of 2010, more than 45,000 cases of chlamydia were diagnosed and reported in Canada. Because most cases have no symptoms that actual number of infections is much higher³
- Up to 10.5% of people will have been infected with genital herpes by age 30⁴

Most people with infections don't know they even have it.

The only way to be 100% safe from STIs is to abstain from all sexual activities. If you are going to have sex, the correct and consistent use of latex condoms can help protect you from many STIs including HIV/AIDS. You can't tell if someone is infected by looking at them, so it is always up to you to protect yourself.

CONDOMS AND MONOGAMY

Even if you are in a steady relationship and only have one sexual partner, you can still be at risk for STIs.

“I only have one sexual partner; I'm in a monogamous relationship so I don't need to worry about STIs.”

Maybe you've heard your friends say this or maybe you've said it yourself. But how true is it? Judging by their behaviour, many people seem to think that being in a monogamous relationship will automatically keep them safe from getting an STI. How many people do you know who stopped using condoms because they were in a relationship with someone they trusted? A person can have an STI for months or even years before they met you without showing any signs or symptoms. And they can still transmit that STI to you. It is more common than many may think.

Even if we are always monogamous, we may have had relationships in the past and we will probably have relationships in the future – that is reality. If you are in a monogamous relationship, until both you and your partner complete comprehensive STI tests, it is important to practice consistent condom use. Be sure to protect yourself at all times

CONDOMS: A SMART AND EASY WAY TO REDUCE RISK

Condoms: How Effective Are They?

Consistently using latex or polyurethane condoms is very effective in significantly reducing your risk of transmitting or becoming infected with an STI. The only things more effective than condoms in reducing STI risk are to not have sex at all or to make sure that both you and your partner(s) are STI free (something that is very difficult to do with absolute certainty).

Studies comparing people who use condoms consistently with people who don't use condoms during sex have found that consistent condom use reduces the risk of contracting HIV infection (AIDS), human papillomavirus (HPV), genital herpes, chlamydia, and gonorrhoea⁵. Also, when used properly, condoms are highly effective against pregnancy, making them one of the most effective contraceptives available.

Let's be clear though! Sex with condoms is not 100% risk free, but if you use condoms your STI risk will be much lower. The bottom line is that if you are sexually active, whether you are single or in a relationship, whether you have sex once in a while or every night, using condoms will reduce your risk of STIs.

1. Black, A. et al. (2009). Contraceptive use among Canadian women of reproductive age: results of a national study. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada*, 31, (7), 627-640.

2. Forhan, S.E., et al. (2009). Prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among female adolescents aged 14 to 19 in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 124, 1505-1512.

3. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2010). Reported cases of notifiable STI from January 1 to June 30, 2009 and January 1 to June 30, 2010 and corresponding annual rates for the years 2009 and 2010. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sdscases-casimts/index-eng.php#gon-rates-taux>.

4. CDC. (2010). Seroprevalence of herpes simplex virus type 2 among persons aged 14-49 years, United States, 2005-2008. *MMWR Weekly*, 59, (15), 456-459.

5. McKay, A. (2007). The effectiveness of latex condoms for prevention of STI/HIV. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 16, 57-61.