



Patient & Family Guide  
2021

# Internal and External Condoms



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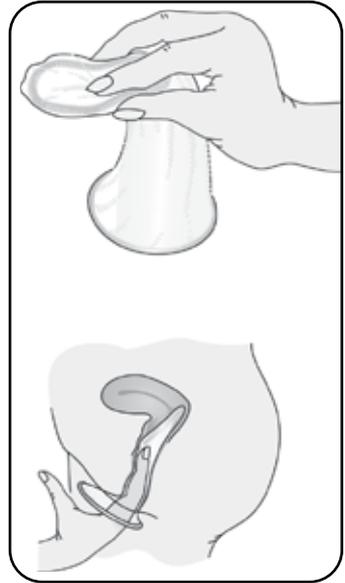
- Condoms are birth control devices that prevent semen (the fluid that contains sperm) from entering a vagina or anus. When semen is released inside a vagina, it may reach an egg and fertilize it, causing pregnancy.
- Condoms also help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, if used properly.
- There are 2 types of condoms:
  - › Internal (worn on the inside of the vagina or anus)
  - › External (worn on the outside of an erect penis).

**Using a condom makes sex safer for both you and your partner.**

## What is an internal condom?

- An internal condom is made of a lubricated (slippery) nitrile polymer (a kind of rubber) sheath (cover) with 2 flexible rings.
- Internal condoms are used during receptive penetrative sex (vaginal or anal sex). The person receiving penetration wears the internal condom.

- One ring fits inside the vagina or anus and the other ring stays outside.
- **Internal condoms must only be used once and then thrown away.**
- **Do not use an internal and external condom at the same time.** This can make the condoms break.



## How does an internal condom work?

Internal condoms catch semen and prevent it from being released inside the vagina or anus.

## How well does an internal condom work to prevent pregnancy?

An internal condom is about 75 to 95% effective in preventing pregnancy **if used properly every time you have sex.** An internal condom is more effective at preventing pregnancy if used with a spermicidal foam or film.

## **What is an external condom?**

An external condom is a form of birth control that can also help protect against STIs when used properly. It is a thin cover worn over an erect (hard) penis. It may be made of latex, lambskin, or polyurethane.

## **How does an external condom work?**

External condoms create a barrier and catch the fluid that contain sperm (semen), preventing the sperm from entering the vagina or anus.

## **How well does an external condom work to prevent pregnancy?**

An external condom is about 87 to 98% effective in preventing pregnancy **if used properly every time you have sex**. An external condom is more effective at preventing pregnancy if used with a spermicidal foam or film.

## **Pros of an external condom:**

- You do not need a prescription.
- Not expensive (low cost) and easy to find in places like drugstores and grocery stores.
- It is small and easy to carry.
- Latex and polyurethane condoms protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, if used properly.
- It may be used with other forms of birth control.
- There are no side effects (unlike hormonal methods of birth control).

## **Cons of an external condom:**

- You must use a new condom each time you have sex.
- It may break, leak, or fall off, causing sperm to leak out when taking off the condom.
- It may lower sensitivity (how much you feel) during sex.
- Latex condoms cannot be used by people with a latex allergy. Lambskin condoms cannot be used by people with a lanolin sensitivity.
- It may not protect against genital warts (human papilloma virus, HPV) or herpes.
- Some people may be sensitive to the lubricant (“lube”) used on some condoms, and may get a rash or irritation.

## **Tips when using an external condom**

- Store condoms at room temperature in a dry location in the original package.
- Store the package away from heat and light. Condoms may get damaged if kept in a wallet or pocket.
- **Do not use oil-based lubricants.** These break down rubber. Only use water-based or silicone-based lubricants.
- Check the expiry date on each condom package before use.

## **How do I use an external condom?**

**Note: Place the condom over an erect penis before sexual contact (including oral sex). This will help to prevent STIs.**

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Open the package carefully. Avoid tearing the condom. Do not use your teeth.
- You may put lube inside the condom, on the penis, or on the outside of the condom. This helps to prevent irritation.
- Place the opened end of the condom over the erect penis.
- Press or squeeze the tip of the condom between your fingers to prevent breakage.

- Unroll the condom over the entire length of the penis. If the condom does not unroll to the base of the penis, it is not on correctly and a new condom should be used.
- Smooth out any air bubbles.
- After sex, hold the condom at the base of the penis to prevent it from slipping or leaking. Then **withdraw the penis while it is still erect.**
- Throw the condom in the garbage, **not in the toilet.**
- **Do not use a condom more than once.**

## **What should I do if the condom breaks during vaginal sex?**

- To prevent pregnancy, insert a spermicidal foam or film right away, if available.
- To prevent pregnancy, consider taking emergency contraception (the morning after pill). It is available at pharmacies without a prescription.

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with  
a registered nurse about your health care  
questions 24/7.**

# If your partner does not want to use a condom:

Some people do not want to use condoms. **It is important to talk with your partner about your feelings about pregnancy and STIs before you have sex.** You can choose to be abstinent (not have sex) until you and your partner both agree.

**For more information, visit:  
The Society of Obstetricians and  
Gynaecologists of Canada**  
› [www.itsaplan.ca](http://www.itsaplan.ca)

### Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.*

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*Prepared by: Nova Scotia Choice Clinic*

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*Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.