

Internal Condoms

If used correctly, internal condoms are 95% effective. They protect against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

What are internal condoms?

Internal condoms, also referred to as female condoms or femidoms, are made from soft, thin synthetic latex or latex. They're worn inside the vagina to prevent semen getting to the womb.

How do internal condoms work?

Internal condoms are a barrier method of contraception worn inside the vagina. They prevent pregnancy by stopping sperm meeting an egg.

An internal condom can be put into the vagina before sex, but make sure the penis does not come into contact with the vagina before the condom has been put in. Semen can still come out of the penis even before a man has had an orgasm (fully ejaculated).

When used correctly, condoms are the only method of contraception that protects against both pregnancy and STIs.

How to use an internal condom

1. Open the packet and remove the internal condom, taking care not to tear it. Do not open the packet with your teeth.
2. Squeeze the smaller ring at the closed end of the condom and put it into the vagina.
3. Make sure the large ring at the open end of the condom covers the area around the opening of the vagina.
4. Make sure the penis goes in the internal condom, not between the condom and the side of the vagina.
5. After sex, remove the internal condom immediately by gently pulling it out. You can twist the large ring to prevent semen leaking out.
6. Throw away the condom in a bin, not the toilet.

Using lubricant

Internal condoms come pre-lubricated to make them easier to use, but you may also like to use additional lube. Check the packet to find out which lubricants are suitable.

Who can use internal condoms?

Most people can safely use internal condoms. You can also use them immediately after having a baby, miscarriage or abortion. But they may not be suitable for women who do not feel comfortable touching their genital area.

Advantages

- Internal condoms help to protect both partners from STIs, including HIV.
- When used correctly, they're a reliable method of preventing pregnancy.
- It's a form of contraception you only need to use when you have sex.
- There are no serious side effects.

Disadvantages

- Some couples find that putting in a condom interrupts sex. To get around this, insert it in advance or try to make doing so a part of foreplay.
- Female condoms are very strong, but they may split or tear if not used properly.
- They're not as widely available as male condoms and can be more expensive.

Can anything make internal condoms less effective?

Sperm can sometimes get into the vagina during sex, even when using an internal condom. This may happen if:

- the penis touches the area around the vagina before a internal condom is put in
- the internal condom gets pushed too far into the vagina
- the penis accidentally enters between the side of the vagina and the condom
- the condom gets damaged by sharp fingernails or jewellery

If you think sperm has got into your vagina, you may need emergency contraception. You can use emergency contraception up to 5 days after unprotected sex. You should also consider having an STI test. This can be done at a:

- sexual health or genitourinary (GUM) clinic
- contraception clinic
- young people's clinic

If you're under 16 years old

Contraception services are free and confidential, including for people under the age of 16. If you want contraception and are under 16, the doctor, nurse or pharmacist will not tell your parents (or carer) as long as they believe you fully understand your decisions and the information you have been given.

Doctors and nurses work under strict guidelines when dealing with people under 16. They'll encourage you to consider telling your parents, but they will not make you.

The only time a professional might want to tell someone else is if they believe you're at risk of harm, such as abuse. In these circumstances, the risk would need to be serious and they'd usually discuss it with you first.

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Source: www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/female-condoms

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