

# sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

## wildfact

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration classifies condoms as medical devices to be regulated and manufactured according to national standards.

## How often do condoms break?

Not very often. Research and testing of condoms indicate that approximately 1-3% of condoms break. Few things in life are perfect, including human behavior. Condoms fail more often due to human errors and omissions such as ripping a package open with teeth, using oil-based lubricants which weaken the latex, trapping air bubbles in the condom while rolling it down the penis shaft, or lack of adequate lubrication (human or water-based). The failure of condoms to protect against STD/HIV transmission usually results from inconsistent or incorrect use, rather than product failure.

To achieve maximum protection, condoms must be used consistently and correctly each and every time. Here are some tips:

- Don't buy or use condoms past their expiration date.
- Never reuse a condom.
- Store condoms in a cool, dry place, not in a glove compartment or your wallet for an extended length of time.
- Open the condom packet with care. Never use scissors, a knife, or teeth.

- Follow package directions.
- Squeeze the tip of the condom while unrolling.
- Use only water-based lubricants, such as Astroglide or K-Y Jelly. Oil-based lubricants, such as petroleum jelly, baby oil, or body lotion can weaken the latex.
- If you're allergic to latex, buy condoms made from polyurethane. A lambskin ("natural" condom) is too porous to prevent the transmission of disease (although it provides excellent contraception).

Numerous studies have shown that latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing the transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and reducing the risk of transmission of gonorrhea, chlamydia, and trichomoniasis. Proper and consistent use of condoms also reduces the risk of transmitting infections which appear on the skin (e.g. genital herpes, syphilis, and chancroid) when the infected area or site of potential exposure is covered and protected.



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Have a question? Email it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)



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