

## Condoms and lubricants

**Condoms are physical barriers that are used during sexual intercourse (anal, vaginal or oral) to prevent different sexually transmitted infections (STIs) from spreading and to avoid pregnancy.**

When used correctly condoms provide protection mainly against STIs transmitted through genital fluids, such as gonorrhoea, chlamydia, HIV and viral hepatitis. They are, however, less effective for infections spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, such as genital herpes and syphilis.

Condoms must be approved by the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs and must carry the CE (European Community) marking and show the use-by date. These markings guarantee the quality of the condom brand.

### Types of condoms

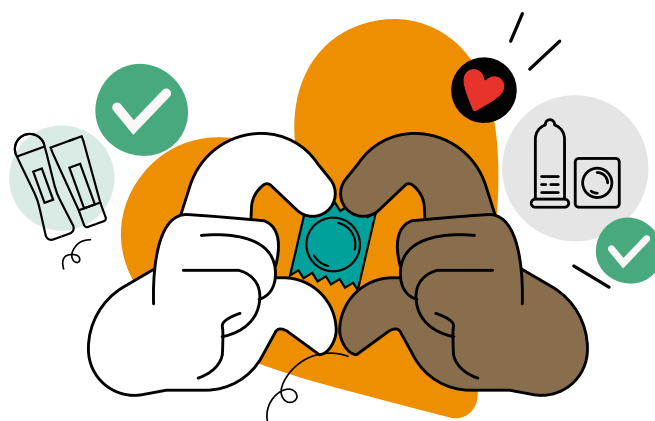
Condoms come in a broad range of shapes, sizes, thicknesses, flavours, textures and colours. Although the standard size will fit most men, smaller and larger condoms are also available. Some condoms are intended only to enhance sexual pleasure and will therefore not provide an effective protective barrier.

**Condoms come in the following materials:**

**Latex:** the most common, effective and economical.

**Polyurethane:** an alternative for people allergic to latex.

**Polyisoprene:** Another more elastic, softer latex-free option.



### Types of use:

**External:** placed on the penis before sexual intercourse such as penetration or oral sex.

**Internal:** inserted into the vagina or anus before sexual intercourse.

**Dental dam:** used between the mouth and the vagina or anus during oral sex.

**Extra strong condoms:** recommended for anal intercourse.

### Advice on correct use:

- Check the use-by date and that the packaging is in good condition.
- Do not reuse the condom.
- Open the package carefully to avoid tearing the condom.
- Follow the instructions on the packaging about how to fit it to prevent it from slipping or breaking during penetration.
- With external condoms, make sure to leave room at the tip for semen and place it on the penis while it is erect.
- With internal condoms, the thinner outer ring should remain outside of the vagina or anus.
- After ejaculation, withdraw the penis immediately before the erection subsides.
- Store condoms in a cool, dry place.
- After use, remember to discard condoms in the grey or green container for non-compost household waste.

You can buy condoms at chemists' shops, stores, supermarkets and online. They are also available for free from NGOs that specialise in sexual health related prevention and at some leisure and/or sex venues. To be sure, however, you should carry your own.

### Lubricants

Sexual lubricants are products designed to reduce friction during sexual intercourse or when using sex toys and to improve comfort, safety and pleasure. They can help to prevent dryness and ease vaginal or anal penetration.

### Types of lubricants

- **Water-based:** these are the most common and safest for most people. They are also compatible with all condoms and sex toys, are easy to clean and do not stain. They may, however, dry faster and need to be reapplied.
- **Silicone-based:** these provide longer-lasting lubrication, slip more than water lubricants, and do not dry quickly. They are not, however, compatible with silicone toys and may damage them..
- **Oil-based:** although these offer long-lasting lubrication and may be more natural, they are not safe to use with latex condoms as they can damage the latex and increase the risk of breakage.

### Advice on correct use

- Try different types to find the lubricant that best suits you.
- Apply enough lubricant to make sure of a comfortable and pleasurable experience.
- If you have allergies or are sensitive to certain products, check the list of ingredients before use.
- Apply the lubricant to the outside of the condom (once it is in place) and to the anus or vaginal area, but not inside the condom, which will make it slip during penetration.
- Store lubricants in a cool, dry place, and check the use-by date.
- Do not use home-made items or any other product not designed for use in sex.
- If you experience persistent irritation or discomfort, talk to a doctor or sexual health specialist.

If you have any problems when using condoms and/or lubricants, such as breakage, irritation or difficulties in negotiating their use with your sexual partner, consult your doctor, the sexual health centre at your hospital or an NGO that specialises in sexual health. Sexual health professionals are trained to offer advice and support.

**gtr** grupo de trabajo sobre tratamientos del VIH  
ENTIDAD DECLARADA DE UTILIDAD PÚBLICA  
ONG DE DESARROLLO



¿TIENES DUDAS  
SOBRE EL TEMA?  
PREGÚNTANOS  
Tel. 93 458 26 41

#### Descargo de responsabilidad

La información contenida en esta ficha no pretende sustituir la recibida por el médico. Las decisiones referentes a la salud siempre deberían tomarse tras consultar con los profesionales sanitarios. La información médica puede quedar desactualizada con rapidez.

Si te surge alguna pregunta tras leer esta ficha, te aconsejamos hablar con tu médico o enfermera o llamar a gTr-VIH, al 93 458 26 41, para comprobar si existe alguna novedad relevante al respecto.

#### SUBVENCIONA



Generalitat de Catalunya

Salut / Agència de Salut Pública de Catalunya



Diputació de Barcelona

Àrea d'Igualltat i Sostenibilitat Social



Ajuntament de Barcelona

#### COLABORA

