

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

The Campus Health Service Pharmacy offers 100 high quality Durex® condoms for the low price of \$12.99.

Q. How often do condoms break?

A. 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 the condom 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 by using condoms, they must be used consistently and correctly. Here are some tips for improving your condom reliability:

- 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.
- Follow package directions.
- Open the condom packet with care. Never use scissors, a knife, or your teeth.
- 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 and are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases, buy condoms made from a synthetic material such as 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. Condoms block these organisms from passing out of or into the male urethra.

Proper and consistent use of male latex condoms 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. Recent research also shows that condoms can reduce the risks of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). For an excellent article comparing brands of condoms, check out the February 2005 issue of Consumer Reports magazine.

Resources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov) and the American Social Health Association (ashastd.org)



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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