

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

The typical condom will inflate to about three feet high and one foot wide before it bursts during inflation testing (one of the many tests condom makers use).

Q Is it true that HIV can pass through the pores in a latex condom?

A. Laboratory studies have demonstrated that latex condoms provide an essentially impermeable barrier to particles the size of HIV (U.S. Centers for Disease Control). Latex condoms have pores that are about 5 microns (0.00002 inches) in size. This size is 10 times smaller than sperm. Condoms are held to strict testing before being distributed to the population and manufacturers test each condom. If just 4 out of 1,000 condoms fail, the entire batch is rejected (the standard for latex gloves is 40 out of 1,000).

Transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection, can be greatly reduced with proper and consistent use of latex condoms when engaging in sexual intercourse. There are many different types and brands of condoms available – however, only latex (rubber) or polyurethane (plastic) condoms provide a highly effective barrier to HIV. In laboratory testing, viruses occasionally have been shown to pass through natural membrane (“skin” or lambskin) condoms. These condoms, made from sheep’s intestines, contain natural pores and therefore are **not** recommended for disease prevention.

In a study of couples using condoms correctly and consistently where one partner had HIV and the other did not, there were zero cases of HIV transmission between partners. On the other hand, inconsistent users of condoms had a ten percent HIV infection rate. When condoms are correctly used for birth control, they have been shown to be 98 percent effective at preventing pregnancy. Even when condoms do break, one study showed that more than half of such breaks occurred prior to ejaculation.

To reduce the risks of HIV transmission, it is important that both you and your partner(s) be tested annually, and use condoms each and every time you have sex. You can get tested confidentially at Campus Health; call 621-9202 for an appointment. You can also buy 100 Durex condoms for just \$12.99 at the CHS Pharmacy on the first floor. If you have any other questions about HIV or STD testing, please call Campus Health at 621-4967.

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

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