**SEXUAL Survival Gear**

**MAKING CONDOMS WORK FOR YOU**

**CONDOM CARE**

Heat (including body heat), light, and pressure weaken latex.

Store in a cool, dry place. If stored properly, a condom should be effective until the expiration date printed on the wrapper.

A condom should be soft and pliable. If one is dry, or sticks to itself, throw it away and use a new one.

Condoms are protective barriers worn either by men over the erect penis or worn by women inserted into the vagina for protection during sexual activities. Using a condom is an effective "but not foolproof" method of preventing sexually transmitted infections (STI) and unintended pregnancies.

Condoms are made of thin latex, polyurethane, or animal membrane. Latex and polyurethane do not allow disease causing organisms to pass through them. However, the pores in animal membrane condoms may not be small enough to effectively block these organisms.

Today's condoms are available in a variety of types and often have special features to meet the diverse needs of men and women. Condoms can vary in length, width, thickness, shape, lubricant, color and other attributes. Comfort is important for consistent use and it may take some experimenting to find the type that's right for you.

All condoms sold in the U.S. must meet strict guidelines established by the Food & Drug Administration. These guidelines reduce the risk of product failure but do not eliminate it. Most condoms that fail do so because of improper use or as a result of accidents which occur during use. Consistent and correct condom use greatly reduces risk and makes sex safer.

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**CONDOM Characteristics**

**LATEX vs. PLASTIC:** Most condoms are made of natural rubber (latex). In the last decade, condoms made of polyurethane or polyisoprene (plastic) have been developed to address several issues. Latex condoms are incompatible with oil-based lubricants and weaken quickly. Polyurethane condoms can be used with nearly any lubricant that is skin-friendly. Polyurethane and polyisoprene condoms are also helpful for latex sensitive individuals.

**LUBRICATION:** When condoms are lubricated, there is less friction and dryness during sex, making condoms less likely to break. Use only water-based lubricants like ID glide or KY Jelly. Oil-based products, such as Vaseline Petroleum Jelly or Intensive Care Lotion, can severely weaken latex. Inadequate or improper lubrication is a leading factor in condom breakage.

**RESERVOIR TIP:** The reservoir tip is designed specifically to accommodate the ejaculate, by reducing the chance that the condom will break from the pressure, or that ejaculate will leak out.

**TEXTURE:** Some of the available textures include: smooth, ribbed, wrinkled, and nubbied. Non-smooth condoms may provide increased sensation while smooth condoms may be more comfortable.

**SIZE:** A condom should cover the entire penis, down to the base. If a condom is too short or not rolled down far enough, it may slip off at an unexpected time. A condom that is snug will be less likely to slip off.

**THICKNESS:** Thin condoms increase sensation. Thick condoms decrease sensation and may extend the time before ejaculation. A thicker condom does not necessarily mean a stronger condom. However, thin condoms may be more likely to tear or get punctures from teeth, jewelry, or fingernails.

**ORAL USE:** Condoms can be used for protection during oral sex. Non-lubricated condoms are available, as are Sheer Glyde Dams which are intended for any type of oral-genital or oral-anal contact. A type of dam can also be made from a condom by cutting off the tip and cutting down the shaft to make a roughly 2" by 7" barrier. In addition, all flavored and scented condoms can be safely tasted or used orally.
Become familiar with the correct procedures for placing and removing condoms. The degree of protection against pregnancy and STI increases dramatically with correct use. When used correctly and consistently, condoms are 98% effective at preventing pregnancy. If using condoms is new to you, it may be beneficial to practice putting them on before the "heat of the moment."

1. Put a condom on prior to any sexual contact. Open the package carefully. Condoms are strong but may be punctured or torn by fingernails or teeth.

2. Squeeze the tip of the condom to leave room for ejaculation.

3. Unroll the condom to cover the entire erect penis. Smooth out any extra air.

4. If desired, add lubricant outside of the condom and/or inside your partner. A water-based lubricant (i.e. ID glide or KY Jelly) can reduce friction and reduce the likelihood of condom breakage.

5. After ejaculation, and before erection subsides, hold the condom on the penis while withdrawing. If this is not done, the condom may slip off and leak sperm. Avoid spillage near partner's genital or anal area.

6. Inspect the condom after intercourse to be sure no breakage has occurred.

7. Remove the condom by rolling it off.

8. Dispose of the condom in waste basket. Do not flush it down the toilet. Condoms are not biodegradable.

9. Always use a new condom with each intercourse. Never attempt to reuse a condom.

For instructions on how to use the Reality Female Condom, please visit: www.femalehealth.com/theproduct.html or call Health Enhancement at 753-9755 for more info.

RESOURCES
Health Enhancement 753-9755  www.health.niu.edu
Check our website for condom availability locations and more safer sex information.