

Why use contraception?

Contraception is necessary if you wish to avoid an unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Every month a woman's ovary produces an egg. When a man ejaculates, his semen contains millions of sperm. It takes only one of these sperm to fertilise an egg and begin a pregnancy. If a couple has sex (penis in vagina) and do not take precautions, there is a high risk of pregnancy. Using contraception allows you to have sex and avoid an unintended pregnancy.

A condom is always a good idea

In Australia, there are more than 20,000 new sexually transmitted disease infections every year. One of the most common of these is chlamydia, which can lead to infertility if left untreated. A condom is your best protection against infections. If you use a condom and water-based lubricant every time you have sex you will have less chance of getting HIV/AIDS and many other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Condoms

The Female Condom

The female condom is a prelubricated sheath that fits loosely into the vagina. A soft removable ring helps to insert it as well as keeping the condom in place. A large flexible ring remains on the outside of the vagina, covering the opening of the vagina (vulva) and providing added protection.

Female condoms are very effective when used correctly. This means using a new one every time you have sex. They are made of polyurethane and are pre-lubricated with a silicone-based lubricant. Oil-based lubricant can be used with the female condom. Condoms are for single use only. The female condom **cannot** be used with a male condom because this can cause it to move out of place.

Side effects

None, unless you are allergic to polyurethane or the lubricant. This is very rare.

Advantages

- can be inserted before sex and does not need to be removed immediately after intercourse
- reduces the risk of pregnancy and STIs
- no need to see a doctor to get them.

The Male Condom

The male condom is a fine rubber (latex) or polyurethane sheath that is worn on an erect (stiff) penis. It collects the sperm and stops them entering the vagina and uterus.

How well it works?

Condoms are 85 per cent effective if used correctly. They are not as effective as the Pill, IUD (Intra Uterine Device), DMPA (Depo Provera or Depo Ralovera) or the Contraceptive Skin Implant.

You must use a new one every time you have sex and take care to put it on and take it off correctly. A water-based lubricant such as KY Jelly or Wet Stuff should be used every time you use a condom as this reduces the risk of the condom breaking. Condoms are for single use only.

Side effects

None, unless you or your partner are allergic to latex rubber or to the lubricant. Allergies to polyurethane condoms are extremely rare.

Advantages

- reduces the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS
- no need to see a doctor to get them.

Disadvantages

The material used in male condoms is perishable so they need to be kept in a cool place and used before the expiry date. Oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly and massage oil should not be used with latex rubber condoms since these products increase the risk of the condom breaking. They are safe to use with polyurethane condoms.

Diaphragms

These are soft rubber caps worn inside the vagina to cover the cervix (the entrance to the uterus). They prevent the sperm entering the uterus.

How well they work

For a diaphragm to work it needs to fit properly, to be put in correctly and to be used every time you have sex. They are about as effective as using condoms.

Advantages

- used only when you have sex and do not affect the body the rest of the time
- can be used when a woman has her periods (menstruation)
- are washed and used again, lasting one to two years.

Disadvantages

- you have to put them in before you have sex (they can be inserted up to 24 hours before) and remove them after six hours
- some women may find them difficult to insert
- a few people are allergic to rubber.

Where to get more information

Women's Health Information Centre (RWH)

Telephone: (03) 9344 2007 or 1800 442 007 (free call)

Email: which@rwh.org.au

<http://wellwomens.rwh.org.au>

The Choices Clinic at the Royal Women's Hospital

A low cost service offering advice, consultation and treatment for all contraceptive and sexual health requirements.

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, 8.30am to 11.30am.

Telephone: (03) 9344 2717

Other RWH fact sheets you may find useful

Ask your carer at The Royal Women's Hospital to give you a printed copy of our other contraception fact sheets:

- [No. 1 Contraception – Your Choices](#)
- [No. 3 The Pill](#)
- [No. 4 Depo Provera – a contraceptive injection](#)
- [No. 5 Implanon – A contraceptive implant](#)
- [No. 6 IUD \(Intra Uterine Device\)](#)

This information is based on the brochure **Basic Facts About Contraception** produced by FPA Health

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More RWH Fact Sheets can be found at www.rwh.org.au/womensinfo/factsheets.cfm

Visit the Wellwomen's website at <http://wellwomens.rwh.org.au> for more health information.

Last Updated 17-Aug-2004. Authorised by: [Maureen Johnson](#). Enquiries: [Maureen Johnson](#).
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