

FEMALE CONDOM

Effectiveness (chances of NOT getting pregnant)

- 79% - 95%

What is the female condom?

- Over the counter barrier method of birth control.
- It is polyurethane (plastic) sheath with an inner ring that fits inside the vagina, around the cervix (like the diaphragm) and an outer ring that covers the outside labia.
- After the man ejaculates, you must twist the end close and gently pull from the vagina.

Advantages of the female condoms

- Can be inserted into the vagina up to eight hours before sexual intercourse.
- Can be used with spermicides to increase STD protection.
- Provides protection against some sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.
- Can be used by people allergic to latex or spermicides or by those who can't take hormones.
- Made from polyurethane plastic, which conducts body heat.
- Erection unnecessary to keep female condom in place.
- Some women and men have an increased sensitivity or "natural" feel compared to male condoms.
- Can be purchased without a prescription.
- Does not interfere with breast-feeding.

Disadvantages of the female condoms

You may experience the following:

- Difficulty inserting and/or keeping in place.
- Cannot be combined with male condoms as they pull each other off.
- May be noisy (add more lubricant if this is a problem).
- May irritate vagina or penis.
- More expensive than male latex condoms.
- Must be used every time you have sex.
- After the man ejaculates, you must twist the end close and gently pull from the vagina.

How Do I decide?

- Are you comfortable touching your vaginal area?
- Will you remember to use it every time you have sex?
- Does this method fit with your religious or moral beliefs?
- Is the female condom the best method for you?
- Do you want to discuss this method with your clinician, family planning clinic staff, husband, partner, friend, or family member? In the Philadelphia area, click here for a list of local family planning clinics. Outside of Philadelphia, please click here for a clinic near you www.plannedparenthood.org.

Reminder: This method provides some protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) including HIV and Hepatitis B. Using condoms consistently can help provide protection from STD's.