



Barrier Methods

Why Choose a Barrier Method?

If an individual with the reproductive structures necessary to become pregnant is sexually active and is fertile, they should ask themselves, "Do I want to become pregnant now?" If their answer is "No," they must use some method of birth control (contraception).

Terminology that is used to describe birth control methods includes contraception, pregnancy prevention, fertility control, and family planning. However, no matter what terminology is used, sexually active people can choose from a number of methods to reduce the possibility of becoming pregnant.

Nevertheless, no method of birth control available today offers perfect protection against sexually transmitted infections (or STI's), except abstinence.

How Do Barrier Methods Work?

In simple terms, all methods of birth control are based on either preventing the sperm from reaching and entering the egg (fertilization) or preventing the fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus (the womb) and starting to grow. Thankfully, new methods of birth control are being developed and tested all the time, and what is appropriate for an individual at one point may change with time and circumstances. Unfortunately, no birth control method, except abstinence, is considered to be 100% effective.

Sometimes a spermicide (used to kill the sperm before they reach the cervix) is added. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends against using spermicides if you are not in a permanent, monogamous relationship, because spermicide may irritate delicate membranes and actually INCREASE the risk of getting an STI!

There are many forms of barrier birth control and they all have advantages and disadvantages.

While barrier methods of contraception generally do not have the side effects of hormonal contraceptives, some forms of barrier contraception (contraceptive sponges and condoms) may be

obtained without a prescription.

The only medical concern to the use of barrier contraception is latex allergy (when using latex condoms). However, with the exception of external (penile) and internal (vaginal) condoms, most methods of barrier contraception are not effective in preventing STI's.

Some Examples of Barrier Methods Are:

- Internal (vaginal) Condom
- External (penile) Condom
- Contraceptive Sponge
 - Diaphragm
 - Spermicides
 - Cervical Cap

Why Do Some People Choose Barrier Methods for Birth Control?

Not all individuals are recommended to use hormonal methods. For example, older individuals and smokers may be at a greater risk of stroke, heart attack, or blood clotting if they use hormonal birth control. Also, individuals who are prone to migraines or depression may not be able to use hormonal methods either.

In addition, some individuals choose not to use hormones. They may be opposed to taking a medication that interferes with their body's own cycles. In these cases, barrier methods may be an acceptable alternative.

Overall, barrier methods are fairly effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly. However, some factors can play a part in exactly HOW effective certain barrier methods can be. For example, certain barrier methods may be slightly less effective for individuals who have had a vaginal birth, because their cervix is slightly larger, and therefore there is more surface area to cover.

When choosing the method that is best for you, here are some things to consider:

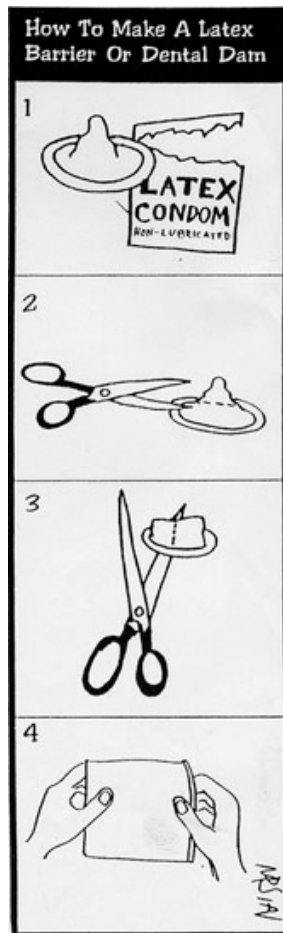
Do You Have Just One Sexual Partner?

We know this is a personal question... However, if you have a new sexual partner, even once or twice, you should always choose the external (penile) condom or the internal (vaginal) condom as your barrier method of choice. They are the only methods that protect against STIs, and the more frequently you change partners, the more at risk you are for STIs. You can also combine methods if you wish. For example, you can use the external (penile) condom and the pill.

How Would You React If You or Your Partner Got Pregnant?

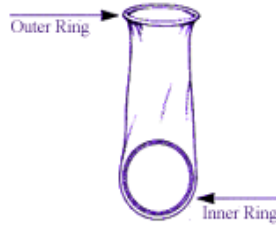
I know what you're thinking... "I'm here to PREVENT pregnancy!" However, no method is foolproof, and unfortunately, barrier methods are generally less effective than hormonal methods. So, if a pregnancy would feel like the end of the world to you at this point in time, then a more effective hormonal method may be better, or a combination of hormonal and barrier. For example, the hormonal Depo-Provera shot with an internal (vaginal) condom.

Here is an example of how to construct your own dental dam:

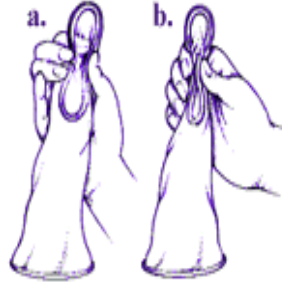


Here is an example of how to insert an internal (vaginal) condom:

1. Check the expiry date.
2. Remove the condom from package and straighten it out.



3. a) Hold the inner ring between your thumb and middle finger. Put your index finger on the pouch between your other two fingers, or
 b) just squeeze the inner ring



4. While holding/squeezing the inner ring insert the condom as far as it will go in the vagina. It is in the right place when the woman can no longer feel the inner ring in the vagina. Don't worry – it cannot go too far.



5. Make sure the condom is not twisted. Also, the outer ring should be outside the vaginal opening and should stay in this position during sex.



When both partners are ready, guide the erect penis or sex toy directly into the condom. Make sure that the penis or sex toy does not go onto the vagina outside of the pouch.

Planned Parenthood Sexual Health Questions? We have Answers!

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