



Dental Dam

What is a Dental Dam?

A dental dam is a rectangular piece of latex or polyurethane (non-latex material). It is used to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) during oral sex. A dental dam is placed over the individual's vulva (the lips, clitoris and vaginal opening), or the anus during oral sex (which is called anilingus or "rimming" when it involves the anus). The dental dam is a barrier between the vulva or anus and the partner's mouth, which helps to protect both partners against STIs.

No sexual activity with another person will be 100% safe; however, using a dental dam will help reduce the risk for you and your partner.

Why Should I Use a Dental Dam?

Pregnancy is not possible during oral sex, but STI transmission is.

Many STI's can be transferred from the mouth to the vagina or anus, and also from the anus or vagina to the mouth.

Where Can I Get Dental Dams?

Unfortunately, because they are a relatively recent safer-sex method, dental dams are not widely available. You can usually purchase them for around \$3 or \$4 each at drug stores, sex stores or online. Planned Parenthood provides dental dams for a \$2 donation.

If you cannot find or afford dental dams, this pamphlet includes easy-to-make instructions.

How Effective Are Dental Dams?

It is important to remember that **no safe sex method offers 100% protection from STI transmission. Sexual activity with another person will always carry risks!** However, dental dams do offer good protection from STIs that are passed through bodily fluids, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea. They

also offer good protection from STIs that are passed from skin-to-skin contact, such as genital herpes and genital warts.

How Do I Properly Use a Dental Dam?

Ensure that both you and your partner both know how to properly use a dental dam – always prioritize your health!

1. Check the expiry date.

2. If desired, you can moisten the vulva or anal area with a **water-based** lubricant.

*Using Vaseline or other **non-water-based** lubricants will injure the dental dam and can irritate the vulva or anus.*

Do not leave lubricant on the fingers as it may be difficult to hold the dam in place.

3. Remove the dental dam from the package and lay it flat covering the entire vulva or anus. One partner must hold the edges of the dam.

Do not stretch the dam.

Important:

- **DO NOT share or reuse a dental dam!**
- **Use a new dental dam for each partner.**
- **Do not reuse the dental dam from the vulva for the anus, or from the anus for the vulva**
 - **Doing any of these things will put you at risk for STIs and other infections.**

After using the dental dam, throw it in the trash.

How Do I Make a Dental Dam?

You can make your own dental dam from a non-lubricated or flavoured male condom by following the directions below.

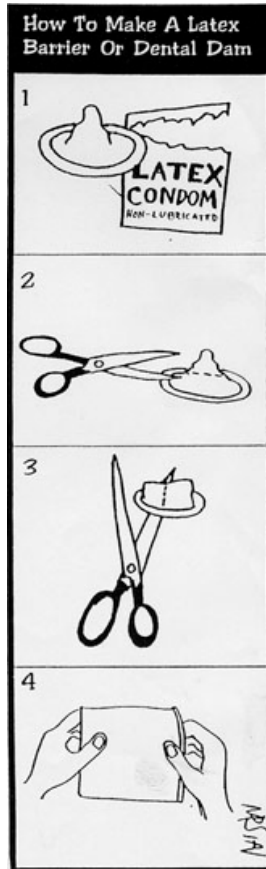
1. Check the expiry date and check the condom package for holes by squeezing the condom package (feel an air bubble)

2. Open the condom package carefully and remove the condom. Leave the condom rolled up.

3. Get a sharp pair of scissors and cut the tip off of the condom.

4. Cut up one side of the condom.

5. Unroll the condom and you should have a rectangular piece of latex. Please follow the instructions for properly using a dental dam.



Tips on Dental Dam Use:

- Never flip a dental dam over and use the other side.
- Hold the dental dam in place with your hands (or your partners hands) on the vulva or anus. If it slips around, it may not be effective.
- If a person has an allergy to latex, polyurethane dental dams are available for purchase online, or you can make your own from a polyurethane condom. Planned Parenthood has these for a \$2 donation.
- Placing a water-based lubricant on the vulva or anus before laying the dental dam in place will allow for more sensation and help to keep the dam in place.
- If you are making a dental dam from a flavoured condom, make sure that the flavoured side is not placed against the vulva. The sugar content may cause a yeast infection.

To make an appointment with a physician and/or find out more information on sexual health topics, please contact us!

Sexual Health Questions? We have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am - 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am - 4:30pm

Wednesday: 9am - 4:30 pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm

Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

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579-1009

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Revised July 2020