

- The outer ring should be twisted to seal the condom so that no semen comes out.
- The female condom can be pulled out.
- It is important to stress that the female condom should be disposed of in waste containers and not, for example, in the toilet.
- Also, since in many countries women dispose of sanitary napkins in a clean and private way, the same procedures can be promoted for the disposal of the female condom.

8. Can I use the female condom in different sexual positions?

The female condom can be used in any sexual position; however, additional lubricant may be needed. But some women may feel more comfortable learning to use the female condom in the missionary position, and then adding other positions after that. Group counselling sessions are often ideal for women to learn from each other how to use the device while having sex in different positions.

9. Can we use a female condom and a male condom at the same time?

You should not use both condoms at the same time. Using the condoms simultaneously may cause friction due to inadequate lubrication resulting in either or both condoms slipping or tearing, and/or the outer ring of the female condom being pushed inside the vagina.



10. How long will the female condom last?

The United States Food and Drug Administration has approved the female condom for a shelf life of 5 years from the date of manufacture. Because of the properties of polyurethane, the female condom is not affected by differences in temperature and humidity, so no special storage conditions are required.

11. How can the risk of unintended pregnancy be minimised?

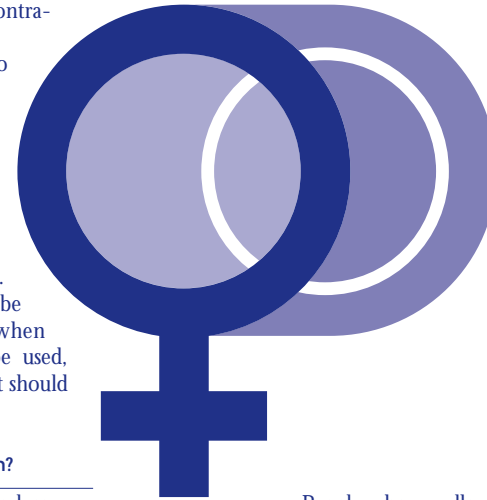
Where the female condom has been approved, it is recommended as both a contraceptive and a method to prevent STI and HIV transmission. It is, therefore, understandable that women may regard the female condom as a contraceptive alternative. If a woman stops using her previous method of contraception when she first tries the female condom, there is a risk that, should she soon reject the female condom, she may not be covered for pregnancy prevention. One counselling strategy that recognises both the contraceptive and disease prevention capabilities of the female condom, as well as the “novelty” of a new method, is to define a period where overlap in contraceptive methods can be encouraged. This type of “trial period” will provide a few months for users to become comfortable with the new method and avoid unintended pregnancy during any switch over period between contraceptive methods. Following this period, the woman can choose to continue with the female condom as her main contraceptive method, to return to her previous method, or to integrate (where appropriate)

the female condom into her contraceptive/disease prevention mix.

Where available, it is important to also discuss the possibility of using emergency contraception as a back-up for the prevention of conception in the case of non use or failure of the female condom (for example if the condom is removed before ejaculation) during any specific act of sexual intercourse. A female condom client should be given information regarding when emergency contraception should be used, where it can be obtained, and how it should be utilised.

12. Who can use the female condom?

- People who want to protect themselves and their partners, and show their partners that they care.
- People who are concerned about unintended pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS.
- People whose partners cannot or will not use the male latex condom.
- Women who are menstruating.
- Women who have recently given birth.
- Women who have had a hysterectomy.
- Women who are peri- and post-menopausal.
- People who are allergic or sensitive to latex.



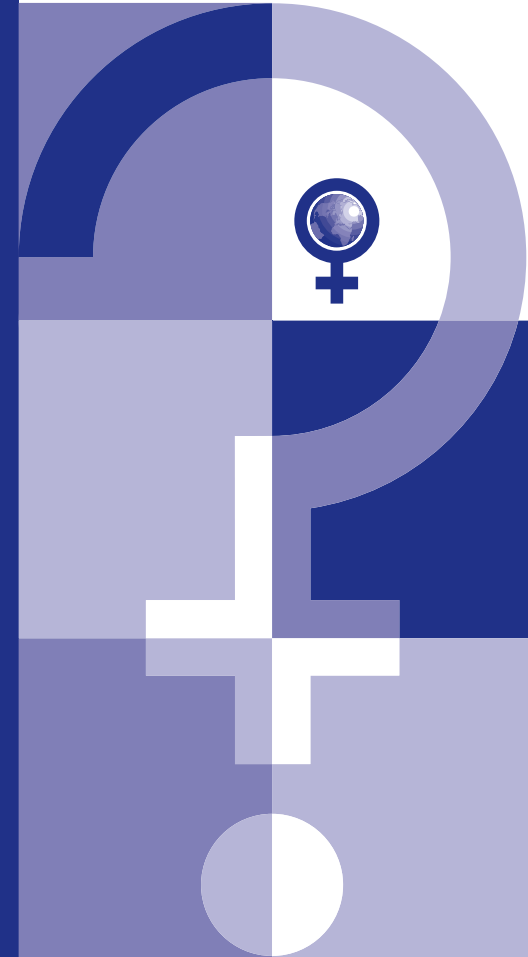
- People who are allergic to nonoxynol-9 spermicide.
- People who are HIV+ or have HIV+ partners.



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Common questions,
problems and concerns about
the female condom

The Female Condom



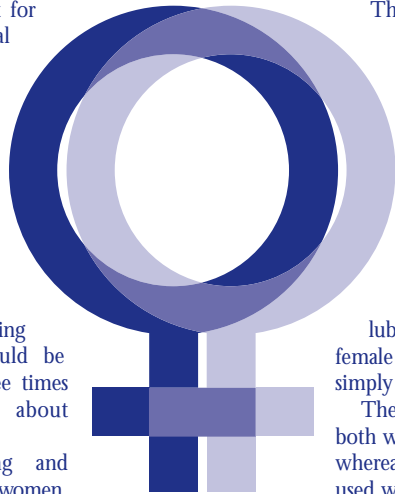
Common questions, problems and concerns about the female condom

1. Is the female condom difficult to use?

The female condom is not difficult to use, but it may take some practice to get used to it. Supportive and positive counselling for new users is very useful to encourage women not to abandon the female condom until they have tried it several times. Research has indicated that the female condom may need to be tried at least three times before users become confident about inserting the device.

Counsellors need to explain that the female condom requires practice and patience. Women should be advised to practice putting it in and removing it prior to using it for the first time during sexual intercourse. They should try to place the device several times, and each time with the body in a different position (e.g. lying down, crouching, sitting) to find the most comfortable one. Encouragement should be given that insertion becomes easier with time, and that it may take several tries before the user becomes comfortable with inserting the female condom. They should be encouraged to try it at least three times before making any decisions about continuing to use it or not.

While individual counselling and personal fitting may help to reassure women,



group sessions and peer groups may overcome early abandonment as women can share anxieties, ideas and laughter with each other.

2. What happens if the penis doesn't enter correctly?

It is important that the penis is guided into the centre of the female condom and not between the vaginal wall and the outer side of the female condom. Diagrams and/or anatomical models should be used to illustrate this problem at introduction. Women and men should be instructed that the penis must be guided to ensure no errors occur. If the penis does enter incorrectly, the man should withdraw his penis and the couple should start over using the same female condom with additional lubrication, if necessary.

3. What kind of lubricant should be used with the female condom?

The female condom comes pre-lubricated with a silicone-based, non-spermicidal lubricant. This lubrication is necessary to assist in the insertion of the device and to allow easy movement during intercourse. The lubricant may make the female condom a little slippery at first.

If the outer ring of the female condom gets pushed in or pulled out of the vagina, more lubricant may be needed. Also, if the female condom makes noise during sex, simply add more lubricant.

The female condom can be used with both water-based and oil-based lubricants, whereas male latex condoms can only be used with water-based lubricants.

4. Can the female condom be used more than once?

At present the female condom is intended for a single use only. However, researchers are currently exploring the safety of re-use of the female condom. It is anticipated that by mid 2000, the results of the ongoing research will provide adequate information and data to recommend clear guidelines on the re-use of the female condom.

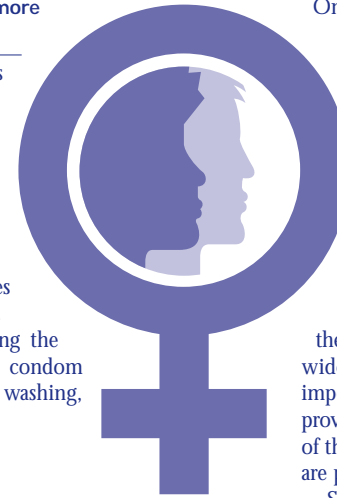
The current research is examining the following properties of the female condom during re-use and after repeated washing, drying and re-lubrication procedures:

- structural integrity;
- microbial retention;
- acceptability;
- safety; and
- potential cleaning, storage and re-lubrication practices.

The practice of re-use has been documented in several countries; therefore, clear guidelines based on scientific evidence are urgently needed in the shortest time possible. Research is ongoing, and we await the results of this work so that appropriate guidance can be developed for providers and users of this potentially life saving device.

5. Is the inner ring uncomfortable for me or my partner?

Some women do report that the inner ring is uncomfortable. If it is, you can try to place the female condom differently (i.e. reinsert or re-position the device) so that the inner ring is tucked back behind the cervix and out of way.



On the other hand, some people report that the inner ring adds to both a man's and a woman's sexual pleasure.

6. Is the female condom big?

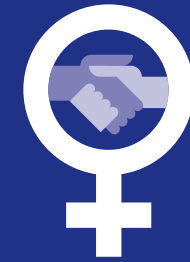
There may be an initial negative reaction to the female condom, because of its size, but this feeling diminishes with use. To avoid this misperception of size, it is useful to compare the female condom to an unrolled male condom to highlight that the female condom is the same length but wider than the male condom. It is also important to note that the female condom provides added protection because the base of the penis and the external female genitalia are partly covered during use.

Some strategies that have been used to reduce the possible negative reaction of the woman's sexual partner include introducing the female condom rolled up, to minimise its size (Mexico), and inserting the female condom before the initiation of sexual activity (Zimbabwe). In Zimbabwe, counselling stressed the advantages of the wider diameter, as many men complain about the constricting nature of male condoms.

7. How do I dispose of the female condom?

The proper removal and disposal of the female condom should be included with the packaging of the female condom as well in introductory training programmes:

- The female condom does not need to be removed immediately after a man's ejaculation, like the male condom. But it should be taken out before the woman stands up to avoid the semen spilling out.



The female condom can expand the options for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially if supported by education, outreach and information activities.