

Female Condom

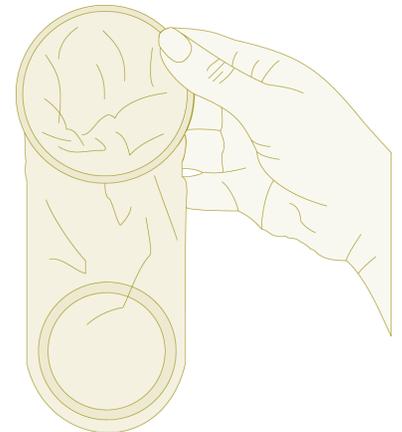
Where can you get female condoms?

Female condoms are available without a prescription at many locations: drug stores, school health clinics, Planned Parenthood, public health department clinics, community service offices (CSOs) and other community health clinics, etc.

How the female condom works:

The female condom (*Reality*) is a soft, loose-fitting polyurethane sheath (pouch) that lines the vagina during sexual intercourse and provides a physical barrier. It provides protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

The *Reality Condom* has a soft ring at each end of the pouch. The ring at the closed end is used to put the condom into the vagina. The larger ring stays outside the vagina and gives some protection to the labia and the base of the penis during intercourse. Follow the package instructions for insertion; the drawings can help show you how to put it in.



How to use the female condom:

- It can be inserted up to 8 hours before intercourse.
- Take the female condom out of its package.
- Hold the pouch with the open end hanging down. Squeeze the inner ring together and slide the condom into the vagina.

Center for Health Training

1809 Seventh Avenue, Suite 400

Seattle, WA 98101-1341

(206) 447.9538 *tel*

(206) 447.9539 *fax*

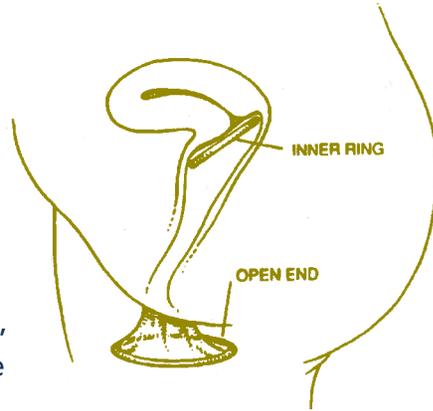
www.centerforhealthtraining.org *website*

seattle@jba-cht.com *email*

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- Put your index finger inside the condom and push the inner ring the rest of the way into the vagina. Check that the inner ring is up past the pubic bone.
- The outer ring stays outside.
- During sex it is okay for the condom to move around. But if you feel the outer ring start to be pushed into the vagina, or if the penis starts to go up along the outside of the condom, STOP, take the condom out and use another condom.
- After sex, squeeze and twist the outer ring to keep the semen from spilling, and gently pull the condom out.
- Throw it away (don't flush it!).



Female and male condoms should not be used together; they can stick together, causing one or both of them to slip out of place.

Effectiveness:

Over one year, about 5 in 100 women will get pregnant if they use the female condom correctly and every time they have sex (perfect use). If you don't use it every time or it slips or breaks or is put in or taken out the wrong way (typical use), your chance of getting pregnant goes up.

Female condom use becomes more effective with practice.

If your condom breaks or slips, you can use emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy. Call your local family planning clinic or 1-888-NOT-2-LATE to find out where you can get ECP.

Benefits of the female condom:

Polyurethane female condoms provide protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, as well as pregnancy. Because they help protect against STIs, female condoms lower your long-term risk for infertility. Female condoms are easily available from many sources without a prescription. You can insert the condom up to 8 hours before intercourse. The polyurethane material is stronger and less likely to cause allergic reactions than the latex used in some male condoms.

Potential side effects or disadvantages:

You will need to practice to learn how to use this method correctly. Some women do not like worrying during sex that the penis may enter the vagina next to the condom; your partner must cooperate.

Some people may feel uncomfortable buying female condoms in a drug store or health clinic. Some may feel uncomfortable using them because they think condom use implies a lack of trust or intimacy. To be effective, a new condom must be used every time, so some planning ahead is necessary. Female condoms are more expensive than male condoms.

Potential risks:

No known health risks.