

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Do condoms protect against all STIs?

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When we talk about the spread of STIs, we mean infections that can spread to others through skin-to-skin contact (non-penetrative sex) or through transmission of bodily fluids (such as semen which comes from ejaculation or pre-cum in penetrative sex), and sometimes both.

Condoms are highly effective in reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) spread through bodily fluids, but it's crucial to understand their limitations. First, when we say that condoms are effective, specifically 98% effective, we are referring to latex condoms only. These are the condoms most often found in stores, such as the majority of Durex condoms. On the other hand, condoms made out of lambskin protect against semen, but are not effective against the spread of STIs.

Here's a list of STIs that spread through skin-to-skin contact and those that spread through bodily fluids:

STIs spread through skin-to-skin contact	STIs spread through bodily fluids
HPV	HPV
Herpes (HSV)	Herpes (HSV)
trichomoniasis	trichomoniasis
syphilis	HIV
molluscum contagiosum	chlamydia
	gonorrhea
	hepatitis B

This means that, while condoms provide a significant barrier STIs spread through bodily fluids, including HIV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, **they do not offer protection against STIs spread through skin-to-skin contact**, such as herpes and syphilis. To learn more about the different ways to contract STIs (including through skin-to-skin contact and non-sexual means), check out our topic here.

So, it's important to know that even if you use condoms correctly every time, there's still a chance of getting these infections.

To get the most out of condoms, **it's super important to use them right every time you have sex**. That means making sure they're put on properly, not using ones that are past their expiration date, and using a new one each time you have sex. To find out more about the proper use of condoms and other contraception, check out our topic here.

Regular STI testing is also essential, even when using condoms, as some infections can show up without symptoms or have an incubation period before symptoms appear. Get tested for STIs together with your partner and talk openly about sexual health.

Taking steps to safeguard your health, even before any sexual activity is also a good idea. This can be done by getting **vaccinated against HPV**, which is another infection for which condoms do not protect against. The HPV vaccine is available for both young men and women from the age of 9.

In conclusion, while condoms are key for preventing many STIs, young men and women should be aware of their limitations. Consistent and correct condom use, coupled with regular STI testing and open communication with partners, is the best strategy for reducing the risk of contracting and spreading STIs. Education is super important for keeping us all healthy in our sexual lives!



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