

## HIV/AIDS and relationships

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### HIV/AIDS and relationships

Everyone should be aware and know about HIV and AIDS, particularly anyone involved in a sexual relationship, because one of the most common ways of spreading HIV is through unprotected sex. The virus may be in an infected person's semen or vaginal secretions and may enter your body through the lining of the vagina, penis, rectum or mouth.

You cannot tell if a person is infected just by looking at them. It can take years for signs of HIV to show. That is why it's so important for anyone who is sexually active to go for HIV testing.

It is important to be open and discuss safe sex with your partner. This can be difficult and even embarrassing at times, but we need to be open and talk about relationships and sex. Being aware of the dangers of unsafe sex is necessary to understand the importance of safe, protected sex.

Always talk to your sexual partner about the importance of safe, protected sex. There are ways to have safe, protected sex to prevent the spread of infections.

Know your HIV status so that you can protect yourself and your sex partners	✓
You can choose not to have sex	✓
You must always wear a condom	✓
You can show physical affection with no penetration or contact with body fluids	✓

## Protected sex is safe sex

Protected sex refers to sex with a condom or without the penis penetrating or entering the vagina or anus. This also refers to a sexual relationship between partners who are in a committed and faithful relationship where both partners are open and honest about their HIV status and only have sex with each other.

## Preventing the spread of HIV with safe, protected sex

An HIV-positive person can still be intimate with their partner. But, to protect against the spread of HIV, you must practise safe, protected sex. Your Healthcare Professional will also be able to supply you with condoms to ensure you can practice safe sex.

Some couples in relationships choose to have an HIV test before they have sex. This helps them make choices about having sex and about their futures. Everyone has the right to say NO to sex and to practice safer sex. Respect your partner's choices.

## Work together to prevent HIV and AIDS

Talk to your partner about HIV and AIDS	✓
Have an HIV test	✓
You can choose to not have sex	✓
Always practise safe sex by using a condom	✓
Find out other ways to be intimate with each other without having penetrative sex	✓
Know the facts about HIV and AIDS	✓

## Condoms

Condoms can be used to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. They are available for both males and females.

Condoms provide the best protection only if they are used correctly when you have sex. Share the responsibility of using condoms with your partner.

## How to use condoms

### The male condom

The male condom prevents the penis and sperm coming into contact with the partner's body or fluids.

- Check the expiry date and make sure the package is not damaged
- Open the condom pack carefully so that the condom does not tear
- Check that the condom will roll onto your penis correctly. The penis must be erect, and the foreskin pulled back
- Squeeze the tip of the condom to make there is no air in it. Roll the condom down to the base of your penis
- Make sure that the condom stays on during sex
- Always pull your penis out immediately after you have ejaculated, before your penis goes soft, otherwise fluid might leak out
- Hold the base of the condom and pull your penis out
- Slide the condom off your penis
- Tie a knot in the condom to prevent the fluid leaking out and wrap it in toilet paper or tissue. Throw it away in a dustbin away from children.

### The female condom

The female condom gives a woman the chance of taking responsibility to protect herself.

- Check the expiry date and make sure the package is not damaged
- Open the pack carefully so that the condom does not tear or break



- The open end (outer ring) is the part that covers the opening of the vagina. The closed end (inner ring) is the part that is inserted in the vagina. The inner ring also helps to hold the condom in place.
- Find a comfortable position to insert the condom. This could be lying down, standing with one leg raised on a chair or squatting.
- Holding the inner ring between your thumb and middle finger, gently squeeze and then insert in your vagina. Be careful not to twist the condom.
- Insert it as far as it will go. You'll know it's in the right place when you can't feel it anymore. The outer ring should be outside the vagina.
- Remove the condom before standing up after sex
- To remove, squeeze and twist the outer ring and pull out gently. Avoid spilling the semen in the condom.
- Wrap the used condom in toilet paper or tissue. Throw it away in a dustbin away from children.

#### Added protection for peace of mind

- Do not use petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or oils such as baby oil to lubricate the condom during sex. This can weaken the condom and cause it to break. Ask a Healthcare Professional what to use should you need more lubrication.
- High quality condoms are available at no cost at government clinics, hospitals, organisations in the community and at most workplaces. You can also buy condoms at shops and pharmacies.
- Always carry a condom with you and use a condom every time you have sex.
- Speak to your Healthcare Professional if you want to know how to use a condom, or if you are having problems using condoms.
- Remember you have to use a new condom each time you have sex.
- Store condoms in a cool place as heat and strong sunlight can damage them.

#### Disclaimer

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Members, who wish to approach the Council for Medical Schemes for assistance, may do so in writing to: Council for Medical Schemes Complaints Unit, Block A, Eco Glades 2 Office Park, 420 Witch-Hazel Avenue, Eco Park, Centurion 0157 or via e-mail at [complaints@medicalschemes.com](mailto:complaints@medicalschemes.com). Customer Care Centre: 0861 123 267/website [www.medicalschemes.com](http://www.medicalschemes.com)

