Are polyurethane condoms as effective as latex ones?  

Dear Alice,

Are polyurethane condoms as effective as latex ones? I bought a box of them and it says that if you are not allergic to latex, then use latex condoms. Why is this?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Compared to latex condoms, polyurethane condoms have been shown in lab tests to be just as effective as barriers to sperm and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Furthermore, correct and consistent use of condoms (latex or polyurethane) during sexual intercourse greatly reduces the risk of an unwanted pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Actually, latex and polyurethane condoms are the only birth control products that also help protect against HIV.

Studies have shown that with typical use (used inconsistently or incorrectly some of the time and consistently and correctly other times), latex condoms are more likely to do the job better than polyurethane condoms. But, this isn't to say that polyurethane condoms are ineffective; they are, certainly, quite effective. In fact, they've passed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) rigorous tests and have gained the FDA's stamp of approval for sale in the United States as an effective method of contraception and HIV prevention.

Compared to latex condoms, polyurethane condoms are less elastic and looser-fitting, making them slightly more likely to break or slip off. (Using lube and being a little less enthusiastic in movements may help to prevent this.) For this reason, many organizations, including the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recommend polyurethane condoms to people sensitive or allergic to latex. For those who are not sensitive or allergic to latex, latex condoms are a better bet for safer sex.

Alice!

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