When's the right time to put on a condom?  [1]

Hey Alice,

Please tell me at what stage a guy should put on the condom?? Should he put it on or should I?? I need to know. Thank you.

? despo

Answer

Dear despo,

It's commendable that you're committed to using protection! You ask two very good questions. First, who puts it on? That's completely up to you and your partner and either of you can take the lead on this one. Some people prefer to put the condom on themselves, while others find it sexy and enjoyable when their partners do it for them. This action can be incorporated into foreplay and is loaded with creative potential. Not sure what your partner prefers? Ask them! Chatting about your respective preferences beforehand may help you feel more relaxed and confident when it's time to make that love connection. Beyond that, you also ask about when to put it on. This really depends on the type of condom you're using.

If you're putting a male condom on a penis (also sometimes called an external condom), it's recommended that you put it on after the penis is erect and before any oral, vaginal, or anal contact with a partner. Why might you want to get wrapped-up before first contact? If a penis is inserted into a consenting partner sans condom, pulling out [2] and putting on a condom before ejaculation may not adequately protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy (if the penis is being inserted into a vagina) because any pre-ejaculate could potentially contain sperm or infectious agents (i.e., bacteria, viruses, or protozoa). Instead, putting on the condom during the act of foreplay is advised, rather than waiting until it's time for penetration. For further instruction on male/external condom use (and removal), check out How to use a condom properly? Avoid breakage and slippage! [3] in the Go Ask Alice! archives.

If you're using a female condom (also called an internal condom at times), your window of opportunity for putting it on is rather wide? if you're using it for vaginal sex. How wide? It can be inserted up to eight hours prior to penile-vaginal penetration to reduce the risk of STIs and pregnancy. However, you can also wait and insert it right before getting your groove on. It's wise to note that some folks use this type of condom for anal sex as well and, if you're using it, it's wise to insert it prior to penetration (as a side note: though there are a number of
folks using internal/female condoms during anal sex, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved the method for use during anal penetration. What’s more, there’s not enough research to know how effective and safe this barrier method is when used during anal sex at this time. For more on female/internal condoms, take a look at What is a female (internal) condom? [4].

Lastly, no matter which type of condom you decide to use, there’s no need to use more than one at a time or both types at once [5]! Using a single condom (of either type) correctly and consistently can provide adequate protection during sexual contact. Still curious about condoms? You’re not the only one; there’s a whole category of Q&As about condoms [6] to peruse in the Go Ask Alice! archives for more information.

Alice!
Category:
Sexual & Reproductive Health [7]
Contraception [8]
Condoms [9]

Related questions

Who brings the contraception: Men or women? [10]
Condom sizes... how do I know what fits? [11]
Can condom stay if erection went away? [12]

Resources

Safer Sex Map (Morningside/ Barnard) [13]
Alice! Health Promotion (Morningside) [14]
Center for Student Wellness (CUMC) [15]
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If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

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