Non-latex condoms and oral sex

Dear Alice,

I have a latex sensitivity, but would like to perform safer oral sex. Are lubricants on non-latex condoms harmful if ingested? I can't seem to find non-latex, non-lubricated condoms anywhere.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Kudos to you for thinking about how to protect yourself and your partner prior to your next sensual rendezvous! There are several types of safer sex barriers that are made sans latex, but these options are often difficult to find in non-lubricated form. With that said though, while they may not be tasty, lubricants aren't typically considered harmful if ingested in the small amounts found on condoms and other safer sex tools. If you have a specific allergy or sensitivity to glycerin or silicone (found in some lubes), be sure to check the label on the box before ingesting.

The following is a list of non-latex barriers that can be used during oral sex performed on the penis, vulva, vagina, and anus. Before you go shopping, however, there are a few details to know about:

- Non-latex barriers are compatible with additional oil-, silicone-, and water-based lubricants (It's good to note that this is not the case with latex barriers, as oil-based lubricants will break down latex and compromise their effectiveness).
- To use condoms for oral sex, cut the tip off the condom and then cut it vertically, forming a square (similar to the shape of a latex dam).

**Lambskin condoms:** These condoms are crafted from the pouch found in lamb intestines. It's crucial to note that while lambskin condoms are effective at preventing pregnancy, they don't provide equal protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

**Polyurethane condoms:** This non-latex option is available in most drug stores. This synthetic material allows for a lot of flexibility when it comes to extra lube?it's compatible with oil-, silicone-, and water-based lubricants as well as petroleum-based ones. It's a good thing, too: these condoms are slightly thinner than latex ones, but aren't as flexible, so applying some extra lube when using them is highly recommended.
**Polyisoprene condoms:** Another barrier material option for those allergic or sensitive to latex or polyurethane is polyisoprene. These condoms may be a bit thicker than polyurethane ones, but they're softer and stretchier.

**Female condoms:** Female condoms are made of a synthetic rubber material called nitrile. These have a larger circumference, which makes them better for coverage of the entire crotch if you’re performing oral sex on a vagina, clitoris, or anus. To add to the fun, the use of female condoms can be combined with a bit more oil-, silicone-, water-, and petroleum-based lubricants for an extra slippery experience.

**Plastic wrap:** Wait... hold the phone. Did you just read "plastic wrap"? You did! Consider this (non-latex) kitchen item for your next oral encounter. It has a few advantages: it always comes lube-free and is the least expensive barrier method (for oral sex) out there. In addition to being accessible and inexpensive, plastic wrap allows for good sensation; however, because it's so thin, it may tear more easily than a latex dam. And, before you make a run for the food storage isle at your local market, make sure to steer clear of the microwave-safe variety ? it has tiny holes that may compromise the protection it offers.

For more information on the safety of and the protection provided by these condoms, take a look at Five kinds of condoms: A guide for consumers [2]. Lastly, since you're interested in lubes and there are a number of them that are compatible with non-latex barriers, you may want to check out What is lube? [3] to learn even more about the ins and outs of the slippery stuff.

Here's to preparing for a stellar (and safer) oral performance!

Alice!

**Category:**
Sexual & Reproductive Health [4]
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**Related questions**

- Latex allergies [6]
- Oral sex risks with no condom? [7]
- Allergic to latex AND polyurethane ? other condom options? [8]
- Allergic to latex condoms [9]

**Resources**

- Safer Sex Map (Morningside/ Barnard) [10]
- Alice! Health Promotion (Morningside) [11]
- Center for Student Wellness (CUMC) [12]

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