

# Sexual Health

## FEMALE CONDOM



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A female condom is a soft disposable polyurethane sheath that acts as a barrier to prevent pregnancy. It is 79 – 95% effective with proper use.

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### *How does it work?*

- Larger than a male condom, it is inserted into the vagina with a soft guiding ring. Once inserted, it lines the vagina, preventing the exchange of body fluids.
- Female condoms may provide better protection against sexually transmitted infections than the male condom. This is because the outer ring of the female condom covers both the woman's labia and the base of the man's penis.
- It traps the sperm so it cannot fertilize the egg.
- It may be inserted into the vagina up to eight hours before intercourse.

### *Advantages*

- Can be worn by women with latex allergies.
- The woman remains in charge of placement and use.
- Only needed at the time of intercourse.
- With proper use, protects against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV infection.
- Can be obtained from pharmacies and family planning clinics without a prescription.

### *Considerations*

- Must be available at the time of intercourse.
- Requires high motivation to use consistently and correctly.
- Flexible inner ring may cause discomfort for some.
- May slip, break or make a noise during intercourse.
- More expensive than the male condom and not available in all stores.

Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit.