



CONDOM QUIZ

© Beyond AIDS Foundation, www.beyondaids.org, updated February 2022

CIRCLE “T” FOR “TRUE OR “F” FOR FALSE. ANSWERS ON REVERSE SIDE.

1. Condoms are completely effective in preventing all sexually transmitted diseases.

T

F

2. Condom use has been the most important element in the successful prevention programs of countries that have reduced the rates of new HIV diagnoses, and national and international HIV prevention programs rely on them as their main strategy.

T

F

3. Latex condoms are more reliable for preventing viral infections than those made from animal skins, but either type can be effective for preventing pregnancy.

T

F

4. The addition of the spermicide nonoxynol-9 to the lubricant of condoms provides additional protection against HIV transmission.

T

F

5. Condoms and latex or plastic barriers have some usefulness to reduce the risk of infection when used in oral sexual contact.

T

F

(over for answers)

ANSWERS TO CONDOM QUIZ

1. False. Condoms have been shown to greatly reduce the risk of HIV transmission, and help prevent several other sexually transmitted infections including syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, that are largely transmitted between the penis and the vagina or cervix. However, condoms help but are less effective against two common infections, herpes type II and HPV (human papillomavirus), because they can also be spread by contact between tissues like the scrotum and labia, which are not shielded by condoms. HPV has multiple types, 2 of which cause 90% of genital warts and 7 of which are the main causes of cancers of the cervix, penis, and anus, and a growing cause of mouth cancer). Gardasil-9 vaccine is highly effective against all 9 of these dangerous or “high-risk” strains of HPV, and is for both males and females.

2. False. Even though condoms are highly effective in protecting the individuals wearing them and their partners against HIV and several other STDs, strategies that have relied predominantly on condoms in their HIV prevention strategies, have had only limited success in reducing new diagnoses in whole populations. Perhaps that is because not enough people use them. National and international HIV prevention strategies now rely heavily on identifying HIV infections and treating them as soon as possible, because suppressing the virus prevents sexual transmission. In the U.S., a daily anti-viral pill referred to as PrEP is also available to prevent HIV but not other STDs, so it should be used with condoms. Uganda and a few other countries that have succeeded in reducing new HIV diagnoses have relied on a combined strategy called “**A-B-C.**”

Abstinence, if not already or currently sexually active. This is the only certain protection. .

Be faithful, if already in an active sexual relationship. Mutual monogamy is most effective if both partners have tested negative for HIV or are of extremely low risk.

Condoms, which are indicated if the first two are not possible. Condoms are believed to have been an important component, but abstinence and monogamy are thought to have been even more effective in achieving the reduction of HIV in these countries.

3. True. The pores and sutures of “skins” (made from sheep intestines) are tight enough to block the transmission of sperm, but viruses are much, much smaller and can leak through. For those allergic to latex, there are now condoms made from types of plastic.

4. False. Nonoxynol-9, which can kill sperm and therefore is useful in vaginal contraceptives, also can kill HIV in a test tube so it was earlier thought to be protective against infection. But studies among African women have shown that those who frequently used nonoxynol-9 products experienced vaginal tissue irritation, which actually **INCREASED** their rate of acquiring HIV! Nonoxynol-9 also has a bitter taste. Overall, there is no reason to use condoms with nonoxynol-9, and some manufacturers are phasing them out.

5. True. Although the risk of HIV from oral sex is low (unless there is blood present on the mouth or genitals), other STDs including HPV, herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia can spread through oral sex, and mouth cancers caused by HPV are increasing. Condoms can be obtained with flavored lubricants specifically designed for fellatio. For cunnilingus or oral-anal contact (“rimming”), squares of plastic wrap or flavored dental dams can help to provide a barrier against infection. They can also increase the tissue area that is mutually protected if an opening is made to wear around a condom-clad penis. These techniques can prevent some infections, though their effectiveness is unknown. Admittedly, their usage rates are low.