

How to talk about condoms

If the partner says:

You can say:

Either men or women:

"I know I'm clean (disease-free): I haven't had sex with anyone in X months."

"Thanks for telling me. As far as I know, I'm disease-free, too. But I'd still like to use a condom since either of us could have an infection and not know it."

"I'm a virgin."

"I'm not. This way we'll both be protected."

"It destroys the romantic atmosphere."

"It doesn't have to be that way."

"I love you! Would I give you an infection?"

"Not intentionally. But many people don't know they're infected. That's why this is best for both of us right now."

"Just this once."

"Once is all it takes."

"I don't have a condom with me."

"I do." OR "Then let's satisfy each other without intercourse."

"You carry a condom around with you? You were planning to seduce me!"

"I always carry one with me because I care about myself. I have one with me tonight because I care about us both."

If the partner says:

You can say:

Special tips for men:

"I'm on the Pill, you don't need a condom."

"I'd like to use it anyway. We'll both be protected from infections we may not realize we have."

"None of my other boyfriends uses a condom. A *real* man isn't afraid."

"Please don't compare me to them. A real man cares about the women he dates, himself, and about their relationship."

"I won't have sex with you if you're going to use a condom."

"So let's put it off until we can agree." OR "OK, then let's try some other things besides intercourse."

If the partner says:

You can say:

Special tips for women:

"I can't feel a thing when I wear a condom: it's like wearing a raincoat in the shower."

"Even if you lose some sensation, you'll still have plenty left."

"I'll lose my erection by the time I stop and put it on."

"I'll help you put it on—that'll help you keep it."

"By the time you put it on, I'm out of the mood."

"Maybe so, but we feel strongly enough for each other to stay in the mood."

"Condoms are unnatural (fake, a total turnoff, etc.)."

"Please let's try to work this out—an infection isn't so great either. So let's give the condom a try. Or maybe we can look for alternatives."

"What kinds of alternatives?"

"Maybe we'll just pet, or postpone sex for a while."



Adapted from: Grieco A, Cutting the Risks for STDs. *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality* March 1987.

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