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How Can Condoms Break?

My friend was using a condom and said it tore. How is that possible?
- Shawn*

Condoms can sometimes rip or tear, but using and storing them properly can help reduce this risk.

Heat, sun, oils, and chemicals all can weaken condoms, making them more susceptible to breakage. Keep condoms away from heat and light, which can dry them out, and don't use oils or lotions with a condom. Carrying a condom in your wallet, where it may be folded or sat on, can also wear down the material and cause the condom to break. Also, don't open a condom with anything sharp, like scissors or teeth.

Check the expiration date on the condom. The material used to make condoms can weaken over time, so don't use one that has expired.

Condoms may rip during use if they don't fit properly or if they are not put on correctly (such as not leaving enough room at the tip of the condom). They also can tear if there is too much friction and not enough lubrication, or if the condom comes into contact with a person's nails, rings, piercings, teeth, or other sharp edges.

Condoms are the only type of birth control that can help prevent both pregnancy and STDs. So it's important to use and store them properly.

If a condom breaks and you or your partner is concerned about pregnancy, call your health care provider or pharmacist to discuss emergency contraception. And both partners should be tested for STDs. People are often not aware that they have an infection but if an infection isn't treated, it could cause serious problems.

For more on this topic, check out the box below.

Reviewed by: Larissa Hirsch, MD

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**Names have been changed to protect user privacy.*



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