

Health

Fun With Condoms!

(Ed. Note: Once again we present an article which deals with sexual information in an honest and often explicit fashion. Rather than censor what we feel to be important and potentially life-saving educational information, we leave our readers to exercise their own judgment in reading this piece.)

Most gay and bisexual men know by now that condoms are a highly effective means of preventing transmission of HIV during anal sex. Most of us also know that unprotected anal intercourse is the sexual activity with the highest risk of HIV transmission.

But knowing that condoms are necessary in this day and age isn't always enough; we also need to know the right way to use them. Just as importantly, we need to know how to have fun with them.

Let's face it - most of us think of condoms as a real drag, at least when we first start using them. It is hard to imagine anyone who started using condoms because they enjoyed them. We use them because they are part of staying alive and keeping our partners healthy.

Implicit in condom use is a reminder of something most of us don't want to be reminded of (least of all during something as intimate as sex) - that we are in the middle of a major epidemic which is killing many in our community. That's not exactly the kind of news that promises a highly erotic start to an evening together.

With practice and some creativity, condoms can become a natural and comfortable part of sex, and not necessarily the obstacle they seem to be at first. So, whether you're a top or a bottom (or a bit of both), here are some important things to learn about using condoms for sex.

The thing itself

First, always use a latex condom (that's why they're called "rubbers" in the first place). Natural lambskin condoms don't work to prevent transmission of viruses because the natural pores are too large to stop them. Latex condoms don't have these pores and are able to stop transmission of HIV as well as Hepatitis B and other sexually transmitted infections.

Second, the right lubrication is extremely important. Lack of proper or sufficient lubrication is one of the principal reasons that condoms sometimes break

during sex. Some condoms come prelubricated, but they rarely have enough lube to last through an entire session of anal sex. Add more lubrication (and lots of it!) before and during sex.

That lubrication needs to be a water-based, water-soluble lubricant (like KY or similar generic brands). Never use an oil or petroleum-based product (no Crisco, no Vaseline, no fancy coconut oils or imported virgin olive oil). Oil-based products have a chemical interaction with the latex which can cause the latex to weaken and break.

Use lots and lots of lubrication, not only on the condom, but on the anus as well.

Putting it on

Believe it or not, there is a right way and a wrong way to put on a condom, and it makes a difference.

Begin by positioning the condom over the tip of the erect penis (how you get it that way is your business). Hold onto the tip of the condom and begin to unroll it down along the shaft.

If the penis involved is uncircumcised (or "uncut"), make sure the foreskin is pulled back down the shaft before putting the condom on.

Most condoms come with a small "reservoir tip" at the end, but some do not. If you are using one without a reservoir, make sure you leave a space at the end, between a quarter and half an inch. If the condom were to be pulled tightly over the penis without this space, the force of ejaculation could cause the condom to break.

Roll the condom down the entire shaft of the penis, as far as it will go. Gently smooth out air bubbles as you work. You may also want to push the hairs at the base of the penis out of the way; otherwise, it might be painful when removing the condom (and the hairs along with it).

After unrolling, put plenty of lubrication on the condom, and then you go at it just as you would otherwise. If for any reason it seems the condom is drying out during sex, add more lubricant. If you feel it breaking or coming off, pull out immediately and put another one on instead.

When the penis begins to get soft (with or without ejaculation), withdraw quickly. Otherwise there is a chance that the condom will slip off inside the partner.

Hold onto the base of the condom

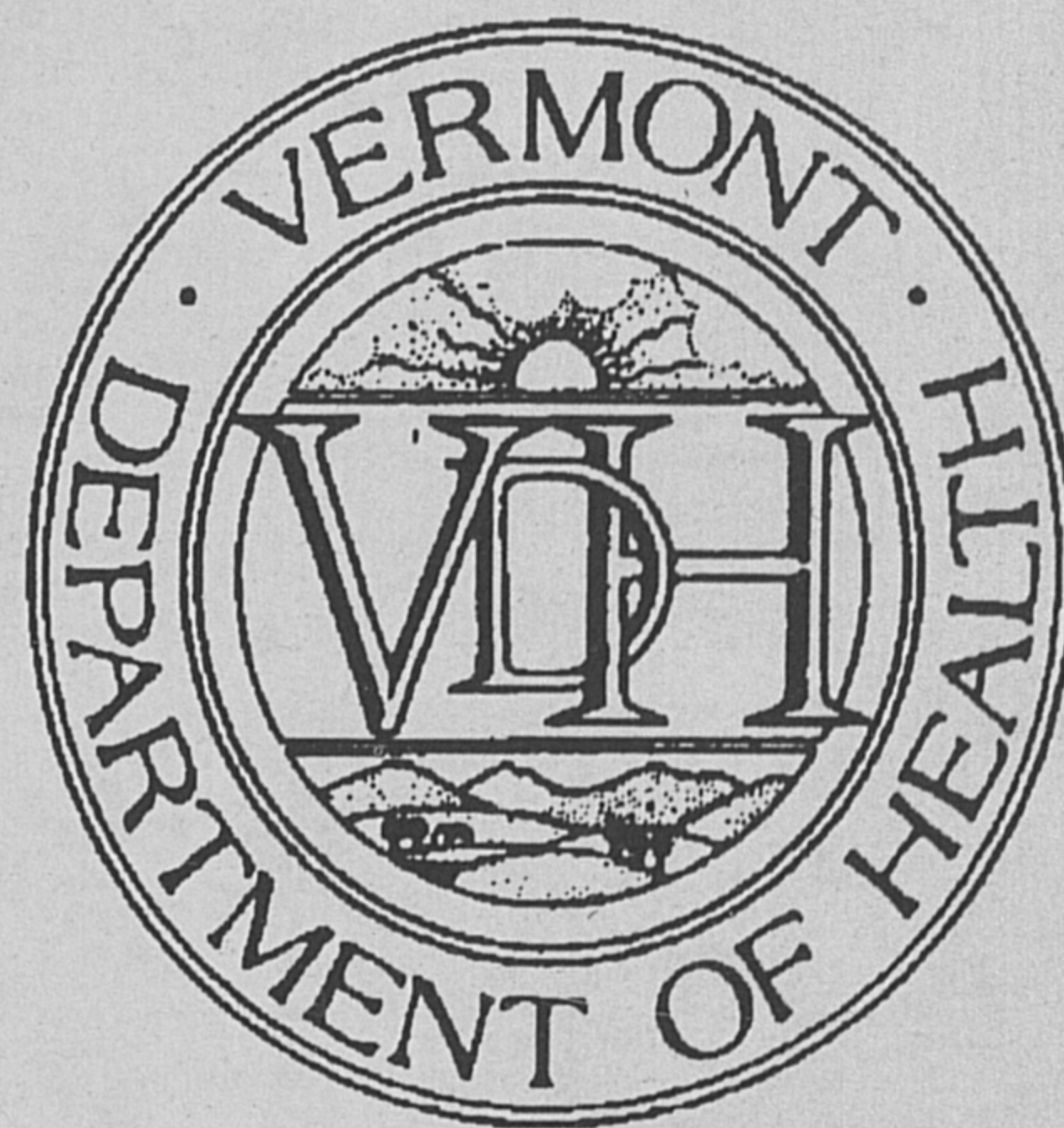
when pulling out. Take the used condom off and throw it away. Use a new one if you're going to have sex again, with the same or with a different partner.

Making the most of it

While it is one thing to know the mechanics of condom use, it is yet another to make using them feel like a natural and enjoyable part of having sex. One of the most common complaints about condoms is that you have to interrupt sex to put the thing on, thereby destroying the spontaneity of the act.

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