

# Safer sex



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To understand the meaning of safer sex
- To consider why it is important to have safer sex
- To know how to use condoms correctly
- To know where to get condoms from
- To know about dams and how to use them

## RESOURCES

- **Resource 1: *Reasons people give for not using condoms*** copy for each pair of learners
- Condom demonstrators: a range of different condoms, sachets of lubricant and dams (note that condom demonstrators are available from several condom manufacturers)
- **Resource 2: *the Golden Rules of condom use*** handout for each learner
- **Resource 3: *Lubricants*** plus examples of the oil- and water-based products described
- **Resource 4: *Where to get condoms from*** picture cards
- **Resource 5: *Safer oral sex***
- Copies of the **Glossary**, for each learner

## RELATED THEMES

### Sexual health topic

Talking about sex and sexual health  
 Sexually transmitted infections  
 HIV and AIDS  
 Contraception  
 Getting help / accessing services

Along with raising awareness of sexual health, encouraging screening and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and providing effective and appropriate contraception, sexual health promotion should include promoting the use of condoms or other barrier methods and the provision of free and easily available condoms.

Talking about safer sex and the reasons why people do not sometimes use condoms can help remove some of the myths and misconceptions about condoms, encourage their use and contribute to a reduction in STIs and unintended pregnancies.

Best practice in condom distribution normally involves a session teaching people how to use condoms before giving free condoms. Whilst this is not always possible or practical, it is proven that the most effective way to get people to understand the golden rules of condom use and reduce the risk of condom failure, is to encourage people to take part in condom demonstration activities and for them to spend time experimenting with condoms before they use them for sex.

When discussing condoms and condom use, teachers can play an important role in normalising condom use. Teachers in particular need to adopt a non-judgmental, open, and matter-of-fact approach to condom demonstration. Also, teachers need to avoid assumptions about learners' sexual lifestyles and ensure that they do not assume that all learners are heterosexual unless known otherwise.

You need to be aware of how cultural and religious issues might affect discussion and learning, particularly about the use of condoms and femidoms, and related issues of sexuality and sexual lifestyle. In particular it should be recognised that some groups may be unable / unwilling to engage in mixed gender groups and / or mixed cultural groups. You may need to take advice about this, perhaps from community or cultural leaders.

#### Related health information

All these sites have good information about sexual health and safer sex. Some have leaflets you can order.

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

Safer sex practices involve good technique in using condoms and lubrication. Whilst learners may have had instruction in the past, or have read instructions, many may not have a clear understanding of correct use. The majority of condom failure is down to incorrect use. Knowing how to use condoms correctly lessens the chances of them splitting or coming off during sex and, therefore, reduces the chances of an unintended pregnancy. It also helps prevent the transmission of most Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV. Particular issues in this theme include:

- following sequenced spoken and written instructions
- reading and writing reasons for not using condoms.

It is important to spend a good amount of time ensuring that all learners are competent in using condoms and fully understand issues around lubrication.

There is information for each activity about support and ESOL. 'Support' is usually for literacy or numeracy skills, but also more general issues that might arise. 'ESOL' relates to learners whose first language is not English, and may include language or cultural issues. You may find that some of these suggestions apply to other learners as well.

#### Core curriculum

Activities in this theme will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- Reading words and phrases (Rt/E3.4)
- Writing straightforward words and phrases (Wt/E2.1)
- Following instructions, in text and graphics (Rt/E3.1)
- Listening to and following instructions (SLlr/E3.1)

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell)  
[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)  
[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)  
[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) (look under health and well-being, then sexual health)  
[www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk)  
[www.lgf.org.uk](http://www.lgf.org.uk)  
 Telephone service:  
 NHS Direct 0845 4647  
 Sexual health helpline 0800 567 123 (free)

### Engage

- It is a good idea at this point to remind learners about previous themes, about why people have sex, STIs, HIV and AIDS. You might also want to refresh their minds about the agreed language to be used and how to take part in a discussion. Ask if there are any questions relating to the last session on HIV and AIDS. Deal with any issues arising from the discussion about facts and opinions. This theme is about safer sex, so the things you can do to avoid getting pregnant or getting an STI or HIV.
- Ask learners to consider what safer sex means to them. Record their responses on a flipchart. Keep these notes to refer to at the end of this session.
- It is a good idea to have some condoms, a femidom and a dental dam available at this point, to demonstrate the next few points.
- Key points for the teacher to bring out during this discussion are as follows.
  - Safer sex means not allowing your partner's body fluids (blood, semen, vaginal fluids) into your body and vice versa (explain this term if need be). It can also mean covering up or avoiding contact with parts of the body that might be infectious (e.g. the sores caused by genital herpes or genital warts). Remind learners about the work on body fluids in the HIV and AIDS session. Remind them about the work on genital herpes and genital warts in the STI session.
  - Safer sex reduces the chance of an unintended or unwanted pregnancy or being infected with a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
  - Using condoms for penetrative vaginal or anal sex is safer sex. Remind learners about the discussion on penetrative sex in Theme 1, Activity 3.
  - Whilst oral sex carries a lower risk of transmitting STIs, using condoms for oral sex that is performed on a man by a woman or another man can make it safer sex.
  - Using a dam for oral sex performed on a woman by a man or another woman is safer sex. It would be a good idea to show a dam at this point, in case learners are unfamiliar with them. It is probably a good idea not to refer to them as 'dental dams' as this is potentially confusing.
  - Dams can also make oral-anal sex safer (sometimes referred to as 'rimming').

What is meant by 'safer sex'? What makes sex safer? Can you think of how you can make this happen?

- Some forms of sex are classed as safer as they avoid any transfer of body fluids, e.g. massage, dry humping and mutual masturbation ('hand job').
- This session is about using condoms properly, the best places to get them and other ways to make sex safer.

## ACTIVITY 1

### Reasons people give for not using condoms

- Confirm that, if they are used correctly and every time, condoms are an effective barrier to most STIs and will help prevent unintended or unwanted pregnancy. Acknowledge that there are many reasons why people do not always use them for penetrative vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Ask the learners why people might not use condoms. Record their responses on a flipchart.
- Give learners, in pairs, a copy of **Resource 1: Reasons people give for not using condoms** and ask them to think about the statements that people give for not using condoms. Ask them to imagine that a friend is saying these statements and write down what they might say in return to counter these statements and encourage the friend to use condoms in future. You could ask learners to do this as a role-play if this seems appropriate. This exercise can be completed individually, in pairs or in small groups.
- Invite the learners to share their responses to each statement. Acknowledge that it isn't always easy to change behaviour and other factors do get in the way, e.g. alcohol, drugs, peer pressure, partner pressure, domestic violence, low self-esteem. Consider and be sensitive to personal experiences of learners – there may have been times in their lives that condoms were not used because of oppressive relationships, due to drug/alcohol use or from experiences of sex working.
- Ask learners to add any further reasons they have come across and discuss these.
- Remain non-judgmental about not using condoms to avoid unintended messages that could make learners feel guilty or foolish about episodes of non-condom use in their lives.
- Conclude by reinforcing that knowing you and your partner are less likely to get an STI or get pregnant can help give you peace of mind and that condoms can be fun to use as part of the whole sexual experience.
- Confirm that people should use condoms with any sex toys used for penetrative sex as infections can be spread this way.
- You should also, if it is appropriate, conduct the same activity for the use of femidoms. Similar reasons will be given for not using them, though you might want to ask learners to add further reasons (e.g. they are too difficult to use). Learners who might use femidoms should also consider condom use.

*We know that people don't use condoms all the time. Why not, do you think? What excuses have you heard for not using condoms?*

### Support

- This activity requires an element of reading and writing. The level is about Entry 3 for reading and Entry 2 for writing but be aware that whilst learners may be able to read reasonably confidently, this does not mean they will be happy with writing.
- Confirm that spelling and handwriting are not important and that no-one will look at their writing.
- Support dyslexic learners or those who have problems with writing – write down the words for them.
- Consider doing the activity orally, as a group activity, with you writing up the words.
- If appropriate, consider doing the activity as a role-play, but be aware that not all learners are comfortable with role-play.

### ESOL

- Consider going through each statement on Resource 1 with the whole group to check understanding before learners proceed with this activity. In particular you will need to explain terms such as 'passion killer', 'easy', 'carried away', 'like having a bath with a raincoat on', which are quite colloquial.
- It may work better for this activity to be completed by the whole group with the teacher reading out or role-playing each statement and asking for responses from the group that the teacher records on a flipchart. This is a good opportunity for ESOL learners to practice framing responses to questions. You could support them by helping them to use the initial statements as the beginning of the response. For example:
  - Statement: 'It doesn't feel natural.'
  - Response: 'You say it doesn't feel natural, but ....'

## ACTIVITY 2

### Condom demonstration

- It might be necessary to check if all learners know what a condom is. Not all may have seen or used one.
- State to the group/learners that there are many different condoms available. Some have different textures, some are thinner, or longer, or flavoured; one even includes a tiny amount of local anaesthetic to help men delay ejaculation. It can be enjoyable finding out which one you prefer using!
- Confirm that for condoms to be effective they need to be used correctly and that the majority of condom failure is down to incorrect usage. Acknowledge that it might seem straightforward – you get a condom, put it on, have sex, then throw it away. There are some golden rules of condom use that should be followed.
- Give each learner a copy of **Resource 2: the Golden Rules of condom use** as a handout.
- Using **Resource 2: the Golden Rules of condom use** as a guide, demonstrate to the group/learners the correct way to use a condom. Take each stage slowly and check understanding at each step, answering any questions as you go through the process. If possible stick closely to these instructions. Say that you'll talk about lubrication in the next part of the session.
- Arrange the group/learners into small groups of three or four people and give each small group a condom demonstrator and

*Step 1 is about checking the condom. Is it good quality? Check for a Kite-Mark. Is it out of date? Check the use-by date. Is it damaged? Check if the packet is torn or already open.*

a range of condoms. Ask them to take it in turns to demonstrate correct condom use to their group members. Encourage learners to open all the condoms so that they can check out the different types of condom that are available.

- Once every learner has had the opportunity to demonstrate condom use, bring the whole group together and ask for comments, observations, questions and learning points.
- Some learners will be less comfortable than others to take part in this activity. Teachers should gently encourage everyone to take part, but not insist that they do so.
- Confirm that condom use can be practised using sex toys and should be used with sex toys for full protection.
- If the teacher encounters a lot of resistance this can be discussed as a whole group. Why did people find this difficult to do? Acknowledge that it is not easy for everyone.
- You may want to add a session on how to use a femidom. You may need to use a pelvic model to demonstrate this.

### Support

- This activity involves listening to sequenced instructions and following them, perhaps using the written and graphic prompt (Resource 2). Some learners will need support for this.
- It will help if your spoken instructions are as close as possible to the written instructions (otherwise it might sound like two different things).
- Confirm that the instructions are numbered and should be followed in that order.

### ESOL

- It will help ESOL learners if key command words are emphasised when you give instructions. These words are in bold text in Resource 2. Point them out to learners.
- Make sure learners have the written instructions in front of them as you talk through them. Point out each instruction as you get to it.
- You may need to explain words or get learners to look them up in the glossary.
- Be aware of cultural and religious sensitivities about condom use and handling condoms.

## ACTIVITY 3

### Lubrication and condoms

- First of all ask learners what they understand by lubrication. It may not be known to all learners and they may use a different term. Ask learners for some examples of substances they know are used as lubricants. Ask if they know what these substances are made from. For instance, do they know that Vaseline is made from oil? (You could point out that it is also called petroleum jelly: petrol=oil.) Confirm that there are two types of lubrication used: oil-based and water-based.
- It would be useful to have examples of the different products to be discussed and in **Resource 3: Lubricants and condoms**. Trying out a little of each product might help to differentiate between oil- and water-based.
- State that sometimes for penetrative sex people may want to use an additional lubricant as well as a condom to make sex easier or more pleasurable.



- Ask the group/learners for examples of times when a lubricant may be required. Responses may include:
  - For anal sex – the anus does not produce natural lubricant and is more likely to be damaged if lubricant is not used. Using lubricant also makes anal sex easier and more comfortable.
  - If a woman is experiencing vaginal dryness, e.g. during pregnancy, following childbirth, as a woman gets older, or if a woman is a heavy amphetamine user.
  - If a man has a larger than average penis.
- State that most condoms are made of latex (rubber) and will be damaged by any oil-based lubricant. Only water-based lubricants should be used.
- Give learners a copy of **Resource 3: Lubricants** and ask them to identify the different types of lubricant pictured in the resource. Lubricants marked with a '**tick**' are water based and suitable for use with latex condoms. Lubricants marked with a '**cross**' are oil based and not suitable for use with condoms. These should be sorted into water-based and oil-based. How many of each?
- Confirm that oil-based lubrication cannot be used with condoms and what would happen if it were used.

#### Support

- Learners need to sort items according to the presence of a cross or tick. This is very straightforward but ensure that the messages about which are the correct types of lubrication are not lost.
- Learners may struggle to understand the categorisation of oil-based and water-based and you may just have to say that it is essential only to use product 'x'.

#### ESOL

- Be aware of any potential cultural and religious sensitivity about the use of lubrication.

### ACTIVITY 4

#### Where you can get condoms and lubricants

- Ask learners to return to the small groups they worked in for the condom demonstration exercise. Give each group a set of picture cards and header cards prepared from **Resource 4: Where to get condoms from**. Tell the groups that each picture represents places where condoms and lubricant can be obtained. Go through each card if necessary, to check learners understand what they represent and can make a link to somewhere they know.
- Ask each group to decide which places give out free condoms and which places sell condoms. Place the cards against the appropriate header card.
- When each group has completed this activity check and, if appropriate, correct the groups' responses. NB the correct responses are: condoms are free from GP surgeries, sexual health

clinics, family planning clinics, walk-in centres and sometimes in gay pubs/bars.

- Depending on the group the teacher is working with, there may be other locations where condoms and lubricant are free and which are not portrayed on the picture cards, for example:
  - young people may get them from the school nursing service
  - people in custodial settings may be able to get them from prison healthcare (dependent on individual institution policies)
  - people receiving support from drug/alcohol services can get them from these services.
- Explain to the group that in **Theme 6** they will be looking at the places they can go to get free condoms and lubricant.

### Support

- Check that learners can correctly identify the locations portrayed in the pictures. It may help to give the name of local places to make them more concrete.
- Learners may not know which places sell and which give away condoms. You may have to tell them and discuss the services offered by the places giving free condoms.
- You may want to consider organising a brief visit to some of the places that give free condoms.

### ESOL

- ESOL and other learners may not know the full range of places offering sexual health services. You may need to discuss these briefly and indicate that you will return to the topic in Theme 6.

## ACTIVITY 5

### Safer oral sex

- Confirm learners' understanding of oral sex.
- State that whilst oral sex is lower in risk of transmitting some STIs, some infections are readily transmitted this way – including Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Syphilis and possibly HIV. There are a number of things people can do to make oral sex safer. These include:
  - using condoms (flavoured or otherwise) for oral sex on a man
  - using dams for oral sex on a woman
  - using dams for oral-anal sex (rimming).
- Pass round a dam, look at what it is and what it's made from. Some learners may have come across the use of dams at the dentist – you may need to talk about this. Using the pictures in **Resource 5: Safer oral sex**, describe how a dam is used. Mention that dams may be available free from some sexual health centres and can also be bought from some shops, supermarkets, pharmacies and on-line from some websites. People can also make a dam from a condom as shown in **Resource 5: Safer oral sex**. If there is time, get learners to cut up some condoms following the instructions.
- Finally, revisit the notes about safer sex made earlier in the **Engage** session and check that all points have been covered.



### Support

- The graphical instructions are straightforward but some learners may need support to follow them confidently.

### ESOL

- Be aware of any potential cultural and religious sensitivity about oral sex.

### Action

- In **Theme 6** learners will look at accessing sexual health services and what advice and treatment they provide. Ask learners to find out which sexual health services are available in their locality and obtain leaflets that give information about those services and bring these with them to the next session.
- With support, learners could have a go at writing their own instructions for putting on a condom. This could be developed into a video for use by other learners.

# Reasons people give for not using condoms

## RESOURCE 1

They say	You could say
Condoms are a passion killer. They spoil the moment.	
They make sex colder or too planned.	
If I carry a condom, people will think I'm easy.	
They don't feel natural.	
I mean to, but get carried away with the moment.	
I can't get hold of them when I need to use them.	
I can't keep an erection when I wear one.	
They don't fit. They are too tight (or too loose).	
Sometimes I get too drunk and forget to use one.	
It's like having a bath with a raincoat on.	

# The Golden Rules of condom use

## RESOURCE 2

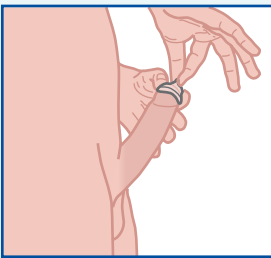


### Step 1: Check it out

- **Check** the 'use by' date. **Don't use** it after this date.
- **Check** it has a Kite-Mark or CE mark (quality standards).
- **Check** the package is not damaged.

### Step 2: Open the packet carefully

- **Squeeze** the condom away from the side of the packet you are tearing open.
- **Watch out** in case your nails or jewellery tear the condom.
- **Never open** the packet using your teeth or anything else sharp.

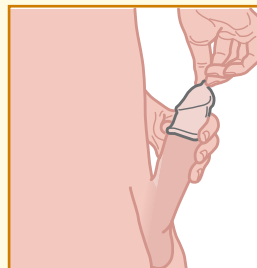


### Step 3: Put it on

- **Check** you know which way the condom will unroll so you don't put it on inside out.
- **Pinch** the end of the condom to make sure there is no air trapped in the end.
- **Put** the condom at the head of the erect penis, ready to roll.

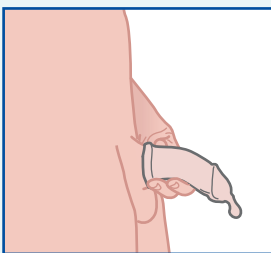
### Step 4: Get ready...

- **Roll** the condom down to the base of the erect penis.
- **Put** lubricant on the outside of the condom. Essential for anal sex.
- **Never put** lubricant inside the condom – it will slip off!



### Step 5: Go for it!

- **Have** sex!
- If it's a long session, **stop** and **change** the condom.
- **Check** every now and then that the condom is still in place and has not been damaged.



### Step 6: ...and the rest.

- After ejaculation (cumming), **hold** the base of the condom so it doesn't come off when you come out.
- **Take it off** carefully to avoid spilling the semen (cum), **wrap** it in tissue and **throw** it in the bin.
- **Do not flush** condoms down the toilet.

#### Tips

- Use the right type of lubricant.
- Using two condoms together does NOT make sex safer. The friction makes them both more likely to split.
- Condoms must only be used once.

# Lubricants

## RESOURCE 3

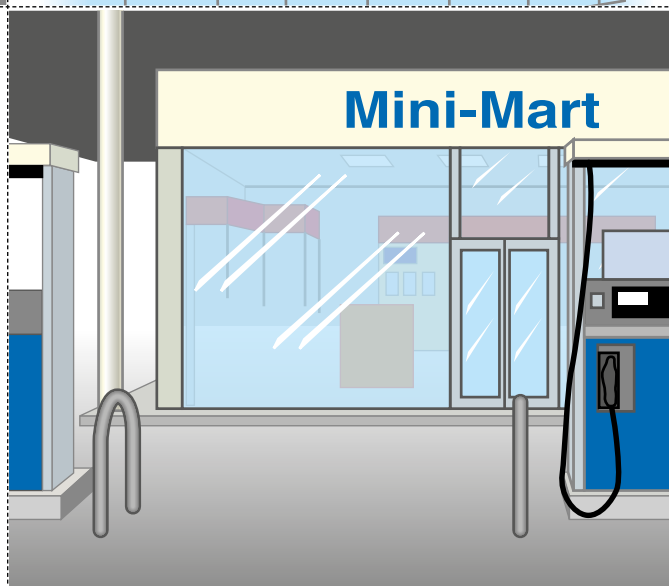
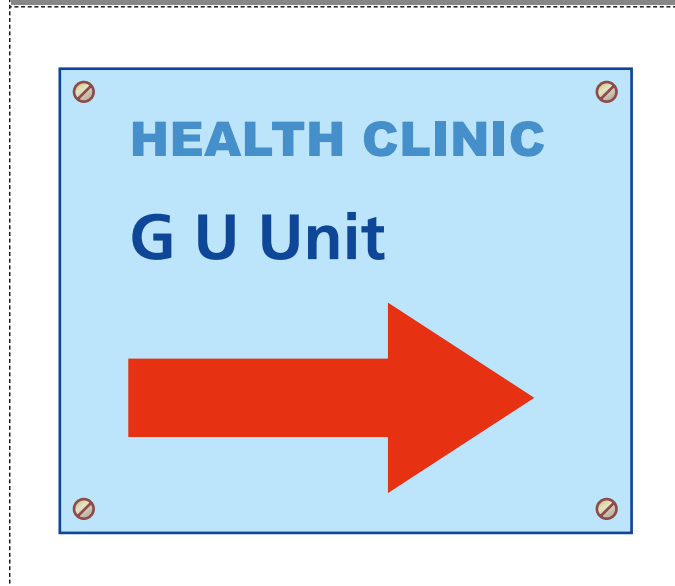
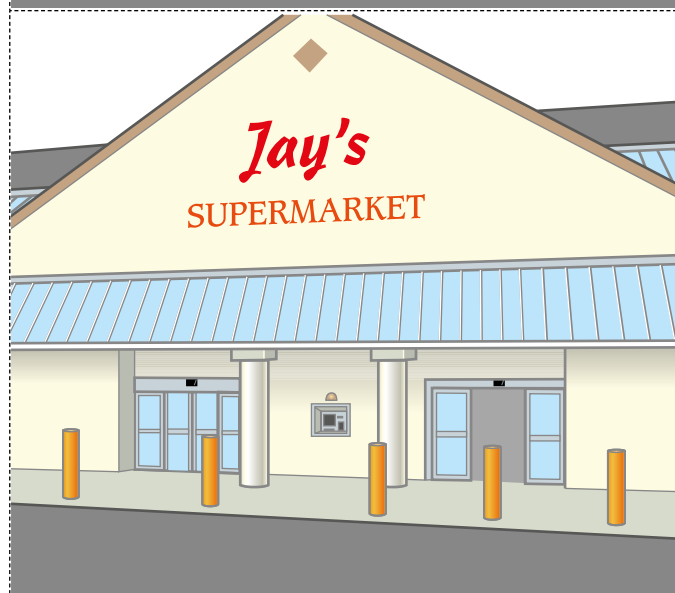
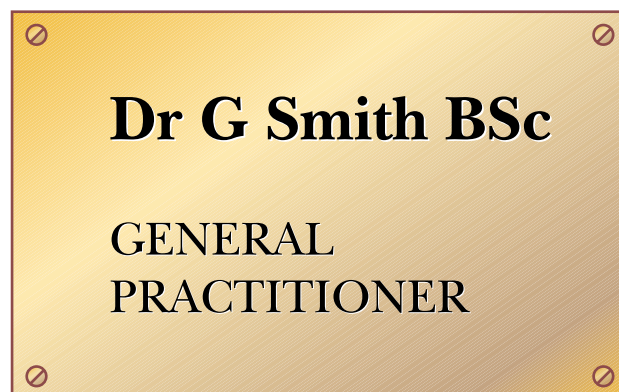
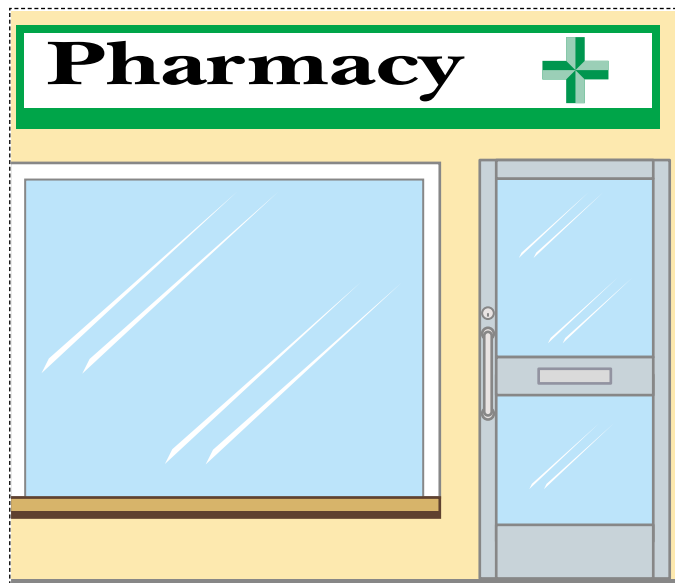
	
	
	
	
	

**You can get free  
condoms from...**

**You can buy  
condoms from...**

# Where to get condoms from

RESOURCE 4B





# Where to get condoms from

## RESOURCE 4C



## Dams

Dams are sheets of flavoured latex (rubber). They can be used as a barrier to prevent infections when you have vaginal-oral (cunnilingus) or anal-oral (rimming) sex.

The dam is placed over the entire vaginal or anal area. You have to hold it in place while you have oral sex. Like condoms, dams should be thrown in the bin after use and only used once.



## How to make a dam from a condom

