

THE CONDOM LINEUP¹¹

by Carolyn Cooperman, MA, LCSW

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Identify factors that influence effective condom usage.
2. Describe the steps of correct condom use.
3. Demonstrate increased comfort with initiating conversation about safer sex and condom use.

Rationale

All too often education about condom use fails to address the many factors essential for correct and consistent use. The active involvement of participants in this lesson is designed to relieve their anxiety about using condoms by increasing their confidence in condoms as a reliable form of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections. The popular “Condom Line-Up” activity and follow-up discussion addresses how to use a condom correctly, and the “Opening Lines” exercise addresses the difficulty teens may have starting a discussion with a partner about using a condom.

Note: The primary purpose of the “line-up” activity is to help participants feel comfortable talking about safer sex. Try to avoid getting bogged down in sequence precision. Indeed, other sequences might be successfully argued, as various steps might happen at multiple times. The point is not so much precision, nor to leave participants feeling encumbered that there are *so many* steps to remember, but that they emerge with strengthened confidence to talk with a partner and use this easy-to-follow method.

Materials

- Board or flip chart paper
- Tape
- Condoms: external and internal
- Samples of silicone- and water-based lubricants
- Twenty signs for “condom cards”; note the sequence but **do not number the cards:**

1. DECIDE TO HAVE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE
2. TALK ABOUT SAFER SEX
3. BUY/GET CONDOMS
4. CHECK EXPIRATION DATE
5. AROUSAL (GETTING TURNED ON)
6. ERECTION
7. OPEN PACKAGE CAREFULLY
8. INSPECT CONDOM
9. PLACE DROP OF LUBE ON INSIDE TIP OF CONDOM
10. HOLD CONDOM AT TIP TO LEAVE SPACE AT END
11. PUT CONDOM ON TIP OF ERECT PENIS
12. ROLL CONDOM DOWN TO BASE OF PENIS
13. SMOOTH OUT AIR BUBBLES
14. INTERCOURSE (VAGINAL, ANAL OR ORAL)
15. EJACULATION
16. BEFORE LOSING ERECTION, HOLD CONDOM AT BASE OF PENIS AND PULL OUT
17. TAKE OFF CONDOM
18. THROW CONDOM AWAY
19. ENJOY THE GOOD FEELINGS
20. REPEAT AS NECESSARY

- **Handout: Thinking More About the Steps**
- **Educator Resource: Thinking *Even More* About the Steps**
- Pictures from magazines of couples who seem to be having an intimate conversation. Be sure to include varied ethnic and age groups as well as some same-gender couples.
- **Using Condoms** (One copy for each participant; see Resources section of this book)

Procedure

1. Introduce the lesson by stating:

Today we will be talking about condoms for protection during vaginal, oral and anal intercourse.

Explain that condoms have been used by millions of couples for hundreds of years.

2. Write the following heading on the board or flip chart paper: **REASONS PEOPLE CHOOSE CONDOMS**. Brainstorm a list of ideas, making sure to include concepts such as “easy to find,” “not expensive,” “no dangerous side effects,” and “good protection against STIs and pregnancy if used consistently and correctly.”
3. Introduce the “Condom Line-Up” by telling participants they can have some fun showing what they know about condom use.
4. Shuffle “condom cards” so they are not in the proper order and distribute to participants. Each participant will have one card, unless the group is small, in which case participants can receive more than one.
5. Explain that the cards, when put in the correct order, show the steps for how to use condoms correctly.
6. Instruct participants to hold the cards and line themselves up shoulder to shoulder with each other, in the correct order, from left to right. (Or if there are more cards than participants, ask them to tape the cards in the correct order on the wall.)
7. After participants have put the cards in line, ask the whole group if the order of cards should be changed.
8. Once everyone agrees on the order, have each participant read their card aloud.

9. Ask participants to tape their steps to the board or wall, in order, and then ask them to form small groups of about four participants each.
10. Distribute one copy of the **Handout: Thinking More About the Steps** to each small group and ask them to complete the handout, assigning one person per group to record on behalf of the entire small group.
11. Give participants about 10 minutes to complete the handout. Then ask for participants' attention and read aloud the **Educator Resource: Thinking Even More About the Steps**. After each answer, allow participants time to compare it with their group's answer to the question.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What questions do you have about the items on the handouts?
 - b. Which step do you think is easiest to follow? Explain.
 - c. Which step might be difficult to follow? How could you make that step easier to follow?
 - d. What differences would there be, if any, in the steps if intercourse ...
 - involves two penises?
 - involves two vulvas?
 - includes oral sex with a penis?
 - includes oral sex with a vulva?
 - includes oral sex on the anus?
12. Note that latex squares ("dental dams") are available for oral sex on the vulva or on the anus. Note also that during vaginal

intercourse, some couples might choose to use an internal condom instead of an external condom, though the two should not be used at the same time due to excessive friction that can cause breakage. Demonstrate how the internal condom works. (The instructions are included in the package.)

13. Tell the group that for many people, starting to talk with a partner about using condoms can be the most difficult part. Ask participants to find another person to work with, and give each pair a card with a magazine picture of a couple.
14. Explain that they will have five minutes to write the first two lines of an “opening conversation” this couple could use to begin talking about safer sex or about using a condom. If there is time, the dialogues can be written on “balloons” of white paper, glued to the pictures, and posted on the wall.
15. When the pairs of participants are ready, have them stand, one pair at a time, holding up their card. Ask them to say to each other the dialogue they have written.
16. Conclude by distributing a copy of **Using Condoms** (see Resources section of this book).

THINKING MORE ABOUT THE STEPS

Directions: Discuss the following questions, assigning one person to be in charge of recording responses for the group.

1. What is missing from this lineup before any sexual activity begins?
2. When should the expiration date be checked?
3. *Erection* is on the list. What does that mean? What's missing?
4. Why should you open the package carefully?
5. How do you "inspect" the condom, and what should you look for?
6. Why should a drop of lube be placed on the inside tip?

7. Why should space be left at the end?

8. What do you need to do if the condom is put on the tip of the penis inside out by mistake?

9. What is different if the penis is uncircumcised (i.e., if there is foreskin)?

10. Why should any air bubbles be smoothed out once the condom is on?

11. "Enjoy the good feelings" is one of the steps. Why is pleasure important?

12. Why should you hold onto the condom at the base of the penis and withdraw before the erection is lost?

13. How might using condoms be different if a person were drunk or high?

THINKING *EVEN MORE* ABOUT THE STEPS

1. **What is missing from this lineup before any sexual activity begins?**

Consent! People need to agree to any sexual activity in which they engage. Partners can check in with each other to make sure they still give their consent throughout the sexual encounter.

2. **When should the expiration date be checked?**

When the condoms are bought and, if the condom is not new, check it again before having intercourse.

3. **Erection is on the list. What does that mean? What's missing?**

Erection includes both penile and clitoral erection. Vaginal lubrication (or wetness) is also a sign of arousal that helps a person avoid feeling pain or discomfort during vaginal intercourse.

Some people do not naturally lubricate very much, and therefore may need some extra lubricant. Lubrication is necessary for condoms not to break during anal sex and to increase pleasure.

Note that just because a person experiences arousal does not necessarily mean they consent to the activity. They still need to check in with each other.

4. **Why should you open the package carefully?**

So you won't tear the condom.

5. **How do you "inspect" the condom, and what should you look for?**

Do **not** unroll the condom before putting it on the penis. Look at the rolled condom for obvious tears. If the condom sticks to itself, looks dry or cracked, then don't use it.

6. **Why should a drop of lube be placed on the inside tip?**

To make the penis feel more sensitive. Remember not to use too much lubricant or the condom may slip off the penis, and remember not to use oil-based lubricants, which will damage the condom. Note that some condoms may already have enough lubricant, making this step unnecessary.

7. **Why should space be left at the end?**

To catch the semen (or “cum”). If no space is left, the semen may leak out of the base or the condom may break.

8. **What do you need to do if the condom is put on the tip of the penis inside out by mistake?**

Throw it away because some semen may have gotten on the tip. If the semen contains something infectious, the condom would be exposed to it.

9. **What is different if the penis is uncircumcised (i.e., if there is foreskin)?**

Be sure the foreskin is pulled back before putting the condom on. If the foreskin isn't pulled back completely before the condom is on, it will stretch the condom at the tip and increase the chance of breaking.

10. **Why should any air bubbles be smoothed out once the condom is on?**

So that it is less likely to break.

11. **“Enjoy the good feelings” is one of the steps. Why is pleasure important?**

Pleasure is a main reason people decide to have sex! It's important to remember orgasm for both partners. Although the penis should be withdrawn soon after ejaculation, the other partner's genitals could be stimulated by fingers, mouth, etc. until they feel satisfied.

12. **Why should you hold onto the condom at the base of the penis and withdraw before the erection is lost?**

To prevent the condom from slipping and semen spilling anywhere near the vagina, mouth or anus.

13. **How might using condoms be different if a person were drunk or high?**

Difficult to remember or coordinate the steps. Having intercourse in the dark might also make it difficult to follow the steps.