**Teacher Background**

### 6.4 Male Latex Condoms

**What they are:** A male latex condom is a sheath made of thin rubber that fits over an erect penis. Condoms also are called “rubbers” or “prophylactics.” People allergic or sensitive to latex should use a hypoallergenic condom (e.g. polyurethane or polyisoprene).

**How they work:** The condom fits snugly over the erect penis and catches semen and sperm during ejaculation. Condoms provide a mechanical barrier that prevents direct contact with semen, sperm and sexually transmitted bacteria and viruses, including HIV.

A common misperception is that condoms contain “holes,” and that HIV can pass through the holes. Laboratory studies show that intact latex condoms provide a continuous barrier to microorganisms, including HIV.

**How to use them:** The condom is unrolled onto the erect penis before the penis is placed anywhere near the other person's body.

Air pollution and heat can weaken latex condoms. Leaving condoms in sunlight for 8 to 10 hours also weakens them. Condoms should not be stored for long periods in a wallet, pants pocket or glove compartment of a car. They can probably be kept safely in a wallet for a short time (up to a month). Condoms should be stored in a cool, dry place, and the package should not be opened until the condom is going to be used. Many condoms include an expiration date. They should not be used after this date or if they are visibly damaged.

Oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly, hand lotions or baby oil can weaken latex condoms and should not be used. Lubricants should be water-based, such as Astroglide, K-Y Jelly, surgical jellies, and most contraceptive jellies.

**Where to get them:** Condoms are available at markets, drugstores, and family planning and STD clinics. They also may be available in vending machines or at some schools. Anyone can buy condoms, regardless of age or gender. No prescription is needed.
Effectiveness and advantages:

Latex condoms can be 98% effective in preventing HIV, other STD, and pregnancy, but only if they are used correctly and consistently—every time a person has sex (i.e., with perfect use). Several studies of “discordant couples” (i.e., couples in which one member is infected with HIV and the other is not) show that using latex condoms with every act of intercourse substantially reduces the risk of HIV transmission. Among couples using condoms for pregnancy prevention, about 18 out of 100 will become pregnant in the first year of typical use, which reflects errors in use or couples forgetting to use a condom every time.

Condoms are double-dipped in latex during the manufacturing process. (Latex gloves are only single-dipped.) Condoms also are regulated by the FDA, and are subject to stringent testing. Several studies show that condom breakage rates in the United States are less than 2%. Condoms are relatively easy to use. With practice, they can become a regular, pleasurable part of a sexual relationship.

Condoms may help prevent HPV, which is the leading cause of cervical cancer. Research has shown that condom use is linked to lower cervical cancer rates. However, HPV can occur in both male and female genital areas that are not covered by condoms. Vaccines are available for young men and women to help protect against the types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers.

Risks and disadvantages:

Condom effectiveness depends on how it is used. Studies have found that most latex condom failure results from user mistakes, such as using the condom incorrectly (e.g., using after genital contact, failing to unroll the condom completely, using oil-based lubricants); using the condom inconsistently; or using a damaged condom (e.g., using a condom that has been torn by fingernails or jewelry, or that has been stored improperly). In terms of pregnancy prevention, first year failure rates among typical users average about 18 out of 100.

There are no serious health risks. Sometimes condoms may irritate the skin, especially if they contain a spermicide. Use of another brand will solve this problem in most cases. People who are allergic to latex can use polyurethane or polyisoprene condoms. Some couples complain that condoms reduce sexual feeling. Others say it makes no difference. Some people complain about having to stop and put on the condom. But if the couple puts it on together, it can become a part of their shared responsibility within the relationship.

Natural membrane (lambskin) condoms will not protect from HIV and other STD to the same degree as latex condoms.

Steps for Proper Use of Condoms

**Before You Have Sex**

1. Obtain new latex condom from drugstore, family planning clinic, vending machine or other source.
2. Check to make sure the package is unopened and the expiration date has not passed.

**As Soon as an Erection Occurs**

3. Open the condom package, being careful not to tear the condom.
4. Make sure the condom is right side out. Check by unrolling the condom a little over 2 fingers to see if the tip of the condom naturally sticks out.
5. Pinch the tip of the condom between your thumb and forefinger to get rid of any air pockets and to create a space for the semen during ejaculation.
6. Put the condom against the head of the erect penis before any genital contact.
7. With your other hand, unroll the condom to the base of the erect penis. (Note: During class demonstration and practice, unroll the condom over the index and middle finger of your hand.)

**After Ejaculation**

8. Hold the condom around the base of the penis and gently pull out the penis (with the condom and its contents) from the partner’s body while the penis is still erect.
9. Take the condom off carefully so semen doesn’t spill. Roll it off starting at the base of the penis.
10. Dispose of the condom in the trash. Never use a condom twice.
Herman Uses a Condom

Directions:
Read slowly. Pause to allow the teacher to demonstrate the actions in bold type.

Part 1

Herman is someone much older than you. He is 19. Herman is kind of shy and nervous around girls, so it took him a while to have a real girlfriend, but it finally happened.

Now Herman and Kiva, who is 18, have been going together for a long time and think they might get married. Eventually they decided to have sex—but they wanted to use condoms to keep themselves safe from HIV, other STD and pregnancy.

Herman went to buy some condoms and took his older brother along to help him. When he got to the store, he saw that there were lots of different kinds. Herman looked for the most expensive ones because he wanted to have the best.

But when he showed his brother the package, his brother said, “No, those are lambskin condoms. They don’t protect you against HIV.” His brother recommended some lubricated latex condoms, which Herman bought. His brother told Herman to practice first, but Herman was too excited and headed straight for his girlfriend Kiva’s house.

Kiva was happy to see him. They talked for a while and then started to kiss and touch. Herman was a little nervous when he got out the condom. (Get out condom and scissors.) He tried to open the condom package with scissors. Oh no, he cut the condom! (Make a cutting noise as you cut the package. Look horrified, then throw the condom away.)

Let’s try again. Herman opened the next package with his fingers. (Open another package using your fingers.) Just thinking about sex was making him excited. He put the condom on the tip of his penis and tried to roll it down. (Put condom the wrong way on your fingers and try to roll it down.) What’s wrong? It didn’t roll. Herman took the condom off and looked at it. (Look at condom.)

Oh, the condom needed to roll the other way. But now there was a little drop of semen on the outside of the condom. To be safe, Herman threw it away (Throw it away.) and got another one.

(continued)
Herman Uses a Condom — Part 1 (continued)

He looked carefully to see which was the outside, and started to roll it down. He rolled the condom halfway down his penis and thought, “Great, I’m ready.” (Roll condom down fingers part way.)

As Herman and Kiva started to have sex, Herman felt the condom slipping off! (Slip condom off.)

Herman threw that one away too (Throw it away.) and got another one. He opened it with his fingers, checked which was the outside, and put it on all the way to the base of his penis. (Put condom on to bottom of fingers and look pleased.)

By this time, Kiva wasn’t very excited anymore. Herman suggested using some Vaseline or baby oil to lubricate the condom. He put Vaseline on the condom and they started having sex. (Put Vaseline on condom.)

Oh no, the condom broke! Herman didn’t know that oil and Vaseline can cause condoms to break, and that if you are going to use a lubricant, it has to be water-based like Astroglide or Aqua Lube. (Show lubricant.)

By now Herman was getting frustrated and was wishing he’d paid more attention in his class about condoms and HIV. He looked in the box for another condom and found...the condom instructions! (Look very happy. Pull out instructions from the box.)

Kiva laughed and said that maybe they should read the instructions together before they used the last condom.
Herman Uses a Condom

Directions:
Read slowly. Pause to allow the teacher to demonstrate the actions in bold type.

Part 2

Herman took the last condom out of the package carefully. (Take condom out.)
He checked to make sure it was right side out. (Check condom.)
He put the condom on his erect penis and rolled it all the way down to the base. (Roll condom to bottom of fingers.)
He put Astroglide on the condom. (Apply lubricant.)
Then he was ready. When Kiva and Herman finished having sex, Herman held the condom around the base of his penis, so that semen wouldn't spill as he pulled out. (Hold base of condom around fingers. Roll off the condom starting at the bottom.)
Herman wrapped the condom in a tissue and threw it away in the garbage. (Wrap condom in tissue and put it in a plastic bag.)
Now Herman and Kiva knew how to use condoms to protect themselves from HIV, other STD and pregnancy!