**THE CHEMISTRY OF CONDOMS**

**WHAT ARE CONDOMS MADE FROM?**

Male condoms are commonly made from latex. To avoid latex allergies, polyurethane condoms can be used instead; polyisoprene condoms are also available. Female condoms are made from polyurethane or nitrile rubber.

- **1855** RUBBER
- **1920** RUBBER LATEX
- **1994** POLYURETHANE
- **2008** POLYISOPRENE

Condoms protect against both pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Studies show that polyurethane condoms are slightly more prone to breakage than latex ones.

**LUBRICANTS & OTHER COMPOUNDS**

Lubricants are usually silicone-based or water-based. Oil-based lubricants should not be used with latex condoms as they can drastically reduce their strength.

- **POLYDIMETHYLSILOXANE (PDMS)**
  - a common type of silicone in lubricants

Some lubricants used on the inside of condoms contain small amounts of the anaesthetic, benzocaine. It has a numbing effect that prevents premature ejaculation.

- **BENZOCAINE**

Many condoms were often coated with lubricants containing nonoxynol-9, a spermicide. In 2001 the World Health Organisation concluded there was no evidence that this coating gave additional protection against pregnancy or STDs.

- **NONOXYNOL-9**

Another condom brand has an ‘erectogenic’ gel (based on nitroglycerin) in the tip. The gel increases blood flow into the penis.

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