

DENTAL DAMS

Dental Dams are great at protecting against STDS during oral sex.

THE FACTS

Dental dams are thin sheets of latex or polyurethane (rubber) that come in many colors, sizes, and flavors. They are great at preventing and spreading sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) during oral sex performed on the vagina or anus.

They are named dental dams because they can also be used during different dental procedures. Because they protect against skin-to-skin contact and the exchange of body fluids, like semen, vaginal fluid, and blood, they are becoming a popular safe sex tool.

When you use a dental dam, you have two safer sex goals. To prevent spreading or getting STDs, you must:

- prevent exchanging any body fluids with your partner and,
- avoid any direct skin-to-skin contact with your partner's genitals and your mouth.

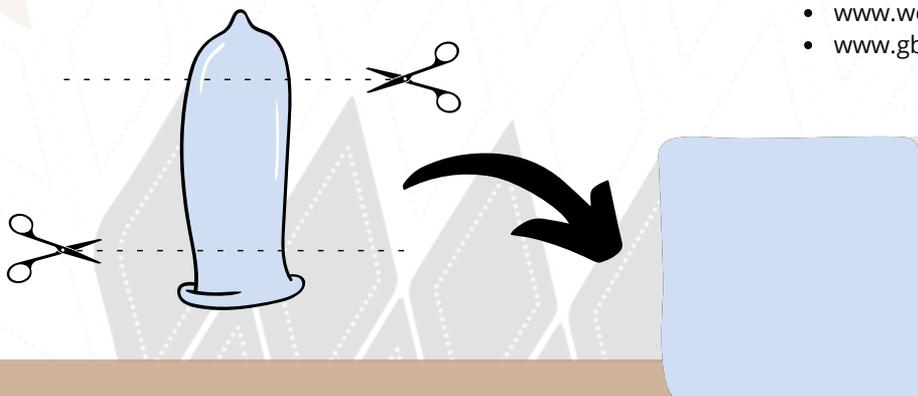
CREATING YOUR OWN DENTAL DAMS

If you are having trouble finding dental dams, unlubricated or dry condoms can be made easily into good substitutes.

With scissors, carefully snip off the elastic band part and tip of a condom and then cut down its length.

The resulting rectangular piece of latex or polyurethane is stretchable.

You can also cut open a medical glove, either made of latex or nitrile (for those with latex sensitivities). The easiest way to make a glove into a dental dam is to cut the four fingers off the top of the glove and then slit down the side of the glove leaving the thumb intact. You can insert your tongue or finger into your partner while still practicing safe oral sex if you do this.



USING DENTAL DAMS

1. Check the expiration date on the dental dam package. If it is good, unfold the dental dam and check it for any holes or tears.
2. If the dental dam has cornstarch powder on it, rinse it off with water. Starch may cause an infection in the vagina and irritation on the anus.
3. Apply water-based lubricant to the side of the dental dam that will touch your partner's genitals. This increases your partner's sensitivity.
4. Place the dental dam over your partner's genitals and hold it, so it doesn't move too much.
5. Only one side of the dam should contact the genitals, and one side should come into contact with the mouth.
6. When you are finished performing oral sex on your partner, throw out the dam. Dental dams should be used only once.
7. Wash your hands with soap and water.

BUYING DENTAL DAMS

It can be challenging to find dental dams. If you are looking for them, try asking sexual health organizations, like Planned Parenthood, or online. You can also buy dental dams at pharmacies, gas stations, and grocery stores. Testing centers and clinics may also have them available for free.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dental dams are a great way to prevent STDs and play it safe during oral sex. If you still have questions after reading this fact sheet, check out the sites below, but also remember that your doctor or nurse, or other healthcare providers can provide you with more information about the resources available in your area.

To learn more visit:

- www.plannedparenthood.org
- www.weRnative.org
- www.gbtchb.org

