

sex toy stories

A user's guide to HIV and STI prevention

toys are fun!

Just like any other toys, sex toys can be fun! Whatever toys are in your toy box, it is important for you to be aware of how to properly care for them so that they will last, and so that you will be safe from any harmful germs that can get trapped on some toys.

Important news.

The most important thing to remember about sex toys is that you should never share toys with anyone without taking proper precautions. Sharing your toys with someone without taking these precautions increases your risk of getting or passing on bacteria or viruses that can cause irritations or serious infections, including yeast infections, chlamydia, herpes and HIV.

Always clean your toys after each use, and especially before sharing, or put a new condom on the toys for each use or for each person (see below for more details on cleaning).

It's important to clean your toys properly between anal and vaginal use too! There are bacteria that live in the anus (bum) that can cause irritations (like yeast infections) in the vagina.



choosing a toy...

As you will see when you visit a store or shop on-line, there are all kinds of things to think about before you buy a sex toy.

You may want a sex toy just for yourself, or you may want to play with others. You may want to use sex toys on a vagina or a bum or a penis...or you may want a toy that is just for your clit.

You may want a vibrating toy (a battery-operated or electric vibrating object, which comes in many shapes and sizes), a dildo (a non-vibrating object, which comes in many sizes and is usually shaped like an erect penis), a dual toy (one with two or more functions...), or toys for anal play (plugs or other toys with bases, or beads).

You will need to consider what you would like to do with the toy. For example, if you want a toy for clitoral stimulation, you may want something that vibrates at various speeds. Or, if you want a toy for penetration, you will need to consider size and shape. If you want to use the toy as a strap-on, you will need to get a toy with a base, and you will have to choose a style and material for the harness.

You will also need to think about the colours, textures, designs and materials your toys are made out of. And you'll need to learn how to care for your toys (including harnesses), so they last longer and so you can avoid getting or passing on germs that can cause irritations or infections.



caring for your toys:

No matter what material your toys are made with, the following information will help you understand what you need to do to take care of them and yourself!

JELLY:

- ★ made of translucent material, usually soft and flexible
- ★ can contain latex, PVC and other vinyls
- ★ surface is porous, so bacteria and viruses can get trapped
- ★ can get sticky, so sometimes it picks up lint and dust
- ★ clean well with soap and warm water or toy cleaner
- ★ it is impossible to keep jelly toys perfectly clean, so you really should use a condom on them.



PLASTIC:

- ★ made of hard material, can get kind of brittle over time
- ★ not made of porous material, but some plastic toys have seams that can trap bacteria and viruses, so they need to be scrubbed properly with a brush
- ★ can be cleaned with soap and warm water, or toy cleaner
- ★ occasionally, can be soaked in a water and bleach mixture (make sure to rinse really well when you use bleach)
- ★ for added safety, it is better to use a condom on plastic toys.




RUBBER:

- ★ made of rather firm material (natural rubber or PVC), but gets more flexible over time
- ★ if you leave rubber toys lying in the sun, you'll notice they get softer
- ★ rubber is porous, so bacteria and viruses can stay stuck in these toys
- ★ can be washed with soap and warm water, or toy cleaner
- ★ of course, the easiest way to keep rubber clean is to use a condom.





LATEX:

- ★ latex is a common material for sex toys, but make sure you aren't allergic to latex before using a latex toy!
 - ★ surface is porous, so bacteria and viruses can get trapped in these toys
 - ★ clean with soap and warm water, or toy cleaner
 - ★ oil-based lubricants on latex toys will make the material break down – use water-based or silicone lubes that you can get at most drug stores or sex toy shops
 - ★ it is always safer to use a condom on latex toys.
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CYBERSKIN:

- ★ made of a mixture of PVC and silicone, soft and supple to the touch
- ★ wash with soap and warm water, or toy cleaner – surface is porous, so you'll need to guard against getting infections from the bacteria and viruses that get caught in the surface
- ★ after washing, sprinkle with a little cornstarch to keep the toys feeling silky smooth
- ★ it's always better for you to use a condom over top of any toys, including cyberskin toys.



SILICONE:

- ★ made of long-lasting material that can retain body heat
- ★ more expensive than most other toys
- ★ surface is non-porous and hypo-allergenic (won't irritate skin), and so no bacteria or viruses will be trapped in them
- ★ can be cleaned with soap and warm water, or toy cleaner
- ★ can also be boiled in water or washed in the dishwasher, as long as the toys don't have any mechanical parts
- ★ check silicone toys for nicks or cuts which can occur over time, and can trap bacteria and viruses
- ★ better safe than sorry...use a condom on silicone toys to avoid transmitting bacteria or viruses.



GLASS:

- ★ made of long-lasting material that can retain body heat
- ★ more expensive than other toys
- ★ surface is non-porous, so bacteria or viruses can't get trapped
- ★ can be cleaned with soap and warm water, or toy cleaner
- ★ can also be boiled in water or washed in the dishwasher
- ★ should be checked out in bright light occasionally to ensure there are no little cracks or chips
- ★ always store in protective case or bag to prevent breaking
- ★ use a condom on glass toys to avoid getting or passing on infections.



more safety tips:

HERE ARE SOME OTHER SAFETY TIPS TO REMEMBER:

- ★ always rinse your toys well after washing them with soap, bleach or toy cleaner to avoid any irritations that can be caused by these chemicals
- ★ after washing sex toys, let them air dry instead of using a towel or tissue to dry them
- ★ never put electric or battery-operated toys under water (unless they are built for that kind of use)
- ★ when storing them, take batteries out of battery-operated toys to avoid leaks
- ★ use water-based or silicone lube on latex toys and with latex condoms (oil-based lube will break down the material, and may cause skin irritation)
- ★ never use silicone lube on silicone toys
- ★ never store two latex or jelly toys together – if they are touching, the material will start melting



Need more HIV and AIDS information and resources?

Contact CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange)

at 1-800 - 263-1638

E-mail: info@catie.ca

www.catie.ca



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