

ORAL BARRIER/DENTAL DAM

WHAT IS AN ORAL BARRIER OR DENTAL DAM?

Oral barriers are also known as dams or dental dams. An oral barrier is a sheet of latex or polyisoprene (non-latex) that is used as a barrier when having oral-vulvar or oral-anal sex. Like condoms they are an easy and effective barrier method to help protect against STI's and other infections.

Dental Dams are available for free at York Region sexual health clinics.

HOW IT WORKS

By covering the vulva or anus during oral sex, dental dams protect both users from the spread of STI's through bodily fluids, including vaginal fluids, blood, and saliva. When used for anal-oral sex, they also protect against ingestion of fecal matter preventing E. coli infection.

EFFECTIVENESS

Like condoms, dental dams must be stored and used correctly and consistently to be effective.

HOW TO USE A DENTAL DAM

- Check the expiration date on the dental dam package
- Check it for any holes or tears
- If the dental dam has starch powder on it, rinse it off with water; starch may cause an infection in the vagina and irritation on the anus
- Apply water-based lubricant to the side of the dental dam that will touch your partner's genitals; this increases your partner's sensitivity
- Place the dental dam over your partner's genitals and hold it, so it doesn't move too much without stretching it
- Only one side of the dam should contact the genitals, the other, or opposite side should come into contact with the mouth, do not flip the dam
- Use a new dam when switching for oral-anal to oral-vulvar sex
- When you are finished performing oral sex on your partner, throw out the dam - do not flush it down the toilet
- Dental dams should be used only once
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after use

No safe sex method offers 100% protection from STI transmission. Remember you and your partner should get tested for STI's.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- York Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics **1-800-361-5653, # 1**
- catie.ca