

# THE STORY OF THE CONDOM

The making of a hero

Meet our humble hero, the life-saving condom.

It's a tough journey becoming a UNFPA approved condom. Here we follow the footsteps of the courageous condom.



**18 billion**

Estimated number of condoms required to meet global need.



**7.3 minutes**

The median duration of sexual intercourse.



**A lifetime**

How long the effects of unprotected sex can last.



## Choice not chance

A condom can be life-changing – it gives people the ability to control their lives.

**98%**

Rate of effectiveness when used **consistently** and **correctly**.



According to WHO, more than **1 million people** acquire a sexually transmitted infection **every day**.



**STI**

Therefore, high quality condoms are of particular importance in guarding against potentially **life-threatening STIs** and **preventing unintended pregnancies**.

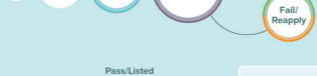


Without the help of our hero, these factors could affect someone for the rest of their lives.



## The Pre-qualification Process

In order to become a UNFPA approved condom, manufacturers must first pass 'prequalification'.



**EOI**  
UNFPA publishes an 'Expression of Interest'.

**Submission**  
If interested, manufacturers respond by submitting the required documentation.

**Review**  
UNFPA technical experts conduct a detailed review of submitted documents. If satisfactory, a factory inspection is arranged.

**Inspection/Testing**  
During the inspection, sampling from 3 batches are sent to an independent 17025 ISO-accredited laboratory for testing.

**Pass/Listed**  
Applicants that have successfully met documentation, inspection and test requirements are added to the WHO/UNFPA list of male condom factories.

**Fail/Reapply**  
If requirements aren't met, the manufacturer is encouraged to put in corrective actions and reapply. Prequalified factories must reapply every three years to maintain prequalified status.

This process can take 3 – 12 months as it depends on a number of factors:

- Scheduling of Inspection
- Laboratory Testing
- Factory Capacity
- Factory commitment to implement corrective measures
- Possible Re-Inspection

**3**

**Every 3 years** – Manufacturers must be re-inspected to maintain their prequalification status.



Since 2001, over 70 factories have applied to gain prequalification by the UNFPA.



Just 26 out of the 70 factories are **currently prequalified**.

Once a prequalification status is under the manufacturer's belt, our hero still has far to go.

Now they must compete for the award of a Long Term Agreement (LTA) with UNFPA, according to public sector procurement practices.



## International Bidding Process Led By UNFPA

Only prequalified manufacturers can **bid for an agreement** to supply condoms for UNFPA. This bidding process can take several months.

**3**

If successful, the selected manufacturer will hold an LTA with UNFPA for **3 years**.



**14**

The number of condom manufacturers who currently have an LTA with UNFPA.



## The Order Process

Buyers can **choose 18 types** of condoms in a variety of sizes, colors, textures, scents, flavors and shapes from the online catalog.

**1**

A government or NGO requests a quotation from UNFPA.

**2**

30-day binding quote is sent by UNFPA.

**3**

The government or NGO pays the invoice and the order is placed.

Length of time:  
**1 - 8 weeks**  
(depending on client feedback)

## Production

Finally, the factories can get to work manufacturing these little latex life-savers.

Length of time:  
**2-16 weeks**  
(depending on whether sourced from stock or fresh production)

## Quality Testing (Sampling and Testing)

During the production process, **100% of condoms are electronically tested** by the manufacturer and internal quality control tests are performed.

Our hero and his friends are **hand-packed** into boxes.

**Sampling and inspection** is then conducted by independent sampling agents appointed by UNFPA. The samples are sent to an ISO 17025 accredited laboratory for independent quality control testing.

(this is referred to as pre-shipment testing)

Length of time:  
**2 weeks**

## Shipment

Condoms are only shipped if they pass pre-shipment testing. Once they pass, the batch is released for shipment, and our hero can **begin his trip around the world**.

Length of time:  
**4-6 weeks**  
(depending on destination)

Length of time:  
**7 week**

## Arrival at port of destination

Upon arrival, our hero must **pass through customs clearance**. Our hero and his life-saving friends are then transported a warehouse where they can be distributed to health clinics, health centers and hospitals.

Finally our humble hero reaches his user.

## How UNFPA Can Help

Around the world, those seeking condoms may face stockouts, poor quality, or counterfeit products.

**35%**

of manufacturers who have gone through the rigorous prequalification process **have successfully passed**, since 2001.

Poor quality condoms put people's health and future plans in jeopardy. **This is where UNFPA's rigorous process comes in.**

The production, testing and distribution requirements mean that people can be confident that the condoms procured by UNFPA meet very high standards.

It's not an easy job to become a UNFPA approved condom, but somebody's got to do it.



In 2013 alone, UNFPA delivered contraceptives to **118 countries**, providing **56 million couple years** of protection.



Next time you're planning your own 7.3 minutes of fun, you can be sure that these little heroes can stand up to the challenge.

## Additional Sources

Facts About Condoms [aboutcondoms.org](http://aboutcondoms.org)

Facts sheet - Sexually transmitted infections [who.int/en](http://who.int/en)

Best sex within 13 minutes, says research [Journal of Sex Research, Aug 4\(2\): 30-9](http://Journal of Sex Research, Aug 4(2): 30-9)