

WITHDRAWN  
TAS JUNE 1991  
REFER TO ISO 4074.1-1990

89174

AS 1919—1985  
UDC 615.477.86

Amdt 1.1988-02-05

# Australian Standard® 1919—1985

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## CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICES— RUBBER CONDOMS



**STANDARDS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**  
*Incorporated by Royal Charter*

This Australian standard was prepared by Committee CS/9, Contraceptive Devices. It was approved on behalf of the Council of the Standards Association of Australia on 26 November 1985 and published on 2 December 1985.

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The following interests are represented on Committee CS/9:

Australian Federation of Consumer Organizations  
Canberra Consumers Inc.  
Confederation of Australian Industry  
Department of Health (Commonwealth)  
National Biological Standards Laboratory  
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners  
Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
State Departments of Health  
The Australian Federation of Family Planning Associations

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**Review of Australian Standards.** *To keep abreast of progress in industry, Australian standards are subject to periodic review and are kept up-to-date by the issue of amendments or new editions as necessary. It is important therefore that standards users ensure that they are in possession of the latest edition, and any amendments thereto.*

*Full details of all SAA publications will be found in the Catalogue of SAA Publications; this information is supplemented each month by SAA's journal 'The Australian Standard', which subscribing members receive, and which gives details of new publications, new editions and amendments, and of withdrawn standards.*

*Suggestions for improvements to Australian standards, addressed to the head office of the Association, are welcomed. Notification of any inaccuracy or ambiguity found in an Australian standard should be made without delay in order that the matter may be investigated and appropriate action taken.*

Please annotate: 22

Copy to MIC Memo to: All  
From: Shirley  
Date: 9/11/07

File No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Re: AS1919 - Contraceptive  
devices - Rubber condoms

AS1919 will be withdrawn in  
December 1990.

The ballot to revise this  
standard was unsuccessful as  
Standards Australia would not  
include mandatory AQL's (Accepted  
Quality Levels. In this case  
1% failure rate considered  
acceptable).

There will now be no  
replacement for AS1919 and  
enquiries should be referred  
to ISO 4074. We will  
not close the ISO standard

Shirley

Please circulate: SG

Copy to NIC  
Memo to: AM  
From: Shirley  
Date: 901120  
File No: \_\_\_\_\_

Re: AS1919 Contraceptives

Devices - Rubber condoms

This standard was to have been withdrawn in December. However, there has been a change in direction and this standard will remain current for the time being.

Shirley

Please consult: AP, CL, SF, Q, B, TC, MC

Are they reliable?  
 Is the quality control satisfactory?  
 Is the Australian Standard adequate?  
 What's the difference between lines?  
 Everyone has questions about condoms.



# CONDOMS REVISITED

Let's face it, condoms are a worry! The humble latex prophylactic has the eyes of the world on it as never before. Society expects it to carry much of the modern burden of contraception plus protection against sexually

transmitted diseases, including AIDS. Was the condom ever designed to be perfect? We have high expectations of the product — but there is also much folklore about its failures. Can we trust the condom?

A team of researchers in Sydney is testing condoms and the effectiveness of Standards in this area, partly funded by the Australian Consumers' Association. In this issue we bring you the results of the first part of the study, which tested condoms to the Australian Standard. Altogether more than 13 000 individual condoms were tested.

The important finding which emerged is that there is a relationship between the strength of a condom and its thinness. When we last reported on condoms (CHOICE, July 1987) the connection had not been substantiated by research. A serious question mark now hangs over condoms which are extra-thin.

The report shows:

- The thinnest condoms have a higher risk of failing the Australian Standard (inflation test). Only one of the six thinnest condom product lines passed the Standard tests (SKIN LESS SKIN Neroa) and it has since been recalled after another sample failed Commonwealth Government testing.
- Only one condom product line which has average or thick walls failed the Standard inflation test.

In both cases there were individual condoms which either passed or failed the Standard tests, as the case may be. However, the Standard assesses the

## DOES THE STANDARD REFLECT REALITY?

In our last condom report the issue was raised whether the Standard accurately reflected the demands placed on condoms during use. Does pumping 12 litres of air into a latex bag over a minute or two duplicate the time, temperature and stresses of sexual intercourse? Of course not. It is purely one of many measures of the strength and integrity of the material.

This issue forms part of the second stage of research — see *The research project*, on page 45.

Nevertheless, the tests are relatively easy to carry out and tell us useful information about quality control and manufacture. The inflation test puts stress on the whole condom, with the purpose of locating poor quality rubber and localised flaws. The freedom from holes test quickly determines the integrity of the latex.

Certainly the presence of a Standard provides a guide to manufacturers and importers and places stringent limits on what can and cannot be sold in Australia. The issue remains whether additional tests should form part of the Standard. Concern is also expressed over sampling methods (are they random?) and the appropriate size of samples for testing, considering that individual batches may contain as many as 100 000 to 300 000 condoms. How many should be tested — to destruction — before the community can be satisfied the particular batch has been made to the highest quality?

Storage is also emerging as an important issue. It's one thing to make a good condom, but poor storage or handling can seriously weaken the latex. There should be a program of testing condoms at retail level, not just at the factory.