Refrain from using frozen condoms? [1]

Dear Alice,

I’m not wrong when I say condoms can freeze, right? I had some condoms in my car when the temperature outside was definitely below freezing. They were only out in the cold for about thirty minutes. Would it be safe to still use them? Or, should I discard the condoms and get new ones? The box says to keep it below 100-degree temperature, but doesn’t say anything about keeping them above a certain temperature. Safe or not?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The condoms in your car are probably okay to use considering the brief period of time (30 minutes) they were out in the freezing cold. If they had been in freezing temperatures longer, you may want to refrain from using them. For longer-term condom storage, keep condoms in a regulated and constant environment. Ideally, condoms need to be kept in a cool, dry storage space, and away from direct sunlight, to prevent deterioration. Think of certain fruits and vegetables — once they are frozen or cooked, their texture and consistency are permanently changed. The same holds true for condoms. If they’ve been exposed to a very cold or a very hot climate long enough to freeze or heat up, then cut them in half (so that no one else can use them) and throw them away.

Why? After spending a considerable amount of time in these temperature extremes, latex can become brittle, weakening it as a form of adequate protection against pregnancy and most sexually transmitted infections (STIs). When warmed up or cooled down to room temperature, even if they look okay, these condoms will be less resilient and effective than before. So to be safest, keep your condoms in a cool (but not freezing!), dry place, where you'll be able to grab them easily in the heat of the moment.

Alice!

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