

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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Physicians Call NIH Condom Report Misguided and Misleading

(Birmingham) - The National Institutes of Health (NIH) released a report on July 20 evaluating the ability of condoms to reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

During the past twenty years epidemic numbers of individuals have become infected with STDs, so that now, "65 million individuals are living with an STD, the majority of which are incurable viral infections." We agree with the NIH that "Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, are common, important and preventable causes of morbidity, mortality and disability ..." We also strongly agree that, "primary prevention of infection is an important health priority."

We commend the NIH for evaluating the extensive medical literature that addresses the effectiveness of condoms. However, after evaluating 182 articles and scientific studies spanning more than two decades, the NIH states that, "research is inconclusive;" that condoms may be helpful in reducing risk for some STDs, but additional research is needed. But our patients cannot wait for more research.

Medical literature already confirms the following:

- Correct condom use as promoted by the CDC and NIH is almost impossible to achieve. For example, correct use includes factors such as correct storage (out of the way of heat or sunlight) both before and after purchase.
- Condoms do not cover all areas of the body that may be affected and many STDs are transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, as well as through other bodily secretions.
- Condoms slip off and break. Although the NIH uses the lowest numbers available, even their paper acknowledges slippage and breakage rates of 0.8 to 4.6 percent.
- Condoms leak. In FDA testing to approve batches of condoms, 1 in 400 condoms are allowed to leak water upon visual inspection and still be approved for use. In addition, this visual test cannot detect less than 1 microliter of fluid escaping, but this amount of seminal fluid may contain 100,000 HIV particles.
- Condoms are made of latex and have naturally occurring holes/flaws. Electron microscopy reveals holes in the latex that are 50 times the size of the HIV virus.
- A lifelong mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner is the best method of preventing all STDs.

The NIH report urging further research is misguided and dooms millions of Americans to future infection. The NIH may be reluctant to admit that condoms provide little protection against most STDs, fearing this will result in decreased condom use. However, it is incumbent upon this prestigious medical organization to tell Americans the whole truth about condom effectiveness. This is also mandated by the recently-enacted Public Law 106-554, requiring that federal agencies provide medically-accurate information regarding the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness of condoms. Promoting condom use without providing all the facts regarding the true risk of STD transmission offers the American public a false sense of security. It is, in essence, medical malpractice and cannot be tolerated.

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