

# RAP\* Time



## RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

A JOINT PROJECT OF  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY, PURDUE UNIVERSITY,  
and TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

\*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. *Slang*. To talk freely and openly.

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## Misconceptions about condom use common among a national sample of adolescents

Promotion of correct condom use is one important public health strategy to reduce STD/HIV prevalence and unwanted pregnancy among young people. Results from the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate that about 50% and about 63% of adolescent females and males, respectively, reported using a condom during last coitus. However, it is not known if these adolescents used the condom correctly.

This study presents the results of a national study concerning the prevalence of three condom use misconceptions among adolescents.

### Methodology

Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health were analyzed to determine the level of misconceptions among 16,667 adolescents 15 to 21 years old who completed the in-home interviews between April and December 1995. Misconceptions were (1) no space at the tip of the condom, (2) Vaseline can be used with condoms, and (3) lambskin protects against HIV better than latex. Whether the prevalence of misconceptions varied by gender,

coital experience, condom use, actual knowledge, and perceived knowledge was also determined.

### Outcomes of the Study

The sample comprised nearly equal proportions of females and males. About 61% and 23% were white and black, respectively. Forty-seven percent reported ever having sexual intercourse with 28% reporting using condoms at least once. Of the sexually experienced participants, 29% reported having four or more lifetime sexual partners.

Major findings include:

- Depending on coital and condom use experience, about one-third to about one-half believed that condoms should be placed tightly onto the penis with no space at the tip.
- About one-third believed that condoms work just as well when Vaseline is used with them, and about one-fifth believed that lambskin condoms protect better against HIV than the latex condom.
- Perception of knowledge about correct condom use was infrequently related to actual knowledge of correct condom use.
- Misconceptions were less likely

among older adolescents, those ever having had intercourse, those reporting four or more lifetime intercourse partners, those who had used condoms, females, and those not reporting a religious affiliation.

### Implications for Prevention

This analysis found many adolescents have misconceptions about correct condom use. This may mean that many adolescent sexuality education and HIV/STD education programs are not adequately addressing correct condom use procedures. Unfortunately, programs that discuss correct condom use may be optional, thus reaching fewer adolescents.

For young people to protect themselves from HIV/STD and unwanted pregnancy, they need complete prevention information, including correct condom use procedures.

SOURCE: Crosby, R. A., & Yarber, W. L. (2001). Perceived versus actual knowledge about correct condom use among U.S. adolescents: Results from a national study. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 28*, 415-420.

## Condoms offer significant protection against genital herpes

This study evaluated the efficacy of condoms in prevention of herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2) transmission.

Participants were 528 monogamous couples discordant for HSV-2 infection, including 261 men and 267 women susceptible for HSV-2.

Twenty-six women (9.7%) and 5 men (1.9%) acquired HSV-2. Younger age, more frequent sex, and source partner having both HSV-1 and HSV-2 vs HSV-2 only were related to higher risk for HSV-2 acquisition. Condom use during more than 25% of sex acts was associated with protection with women, but not for men.

Condom use offers significant protection against HSV-2 infection in susceptible women. Changes in sexual behavior, along with counseling about avoiding sex when a partner has lesions, were associated with reduction in HSV-2 acquisition over time.

SOURCE: Wald, A., et al. (2001). Effect of condoms on reducing the transmission of herpes simplex virus type 2 from men to women. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285, 3100-3106.

## Some MSM not using antiretroviral therapy at recommended levels

The expense and difficulty in regimen adherence are limitations of the antiretroviral combination therapy. This study determined factors related to use of recommended antiretroviral regimens among urban seropositive men who have sex with men.

A probability telephone sample of MSM was taken within regions of Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.

The majority of seropositive MSM with CD4 counts below 500 were using recommended antiretroviral regimens; however, 26% of seropositive MSM were not receiving such care. Men who were younger, who reported a sexual orientation other than homosexual, who had a more recent interview date, who were at middle levels of affiliation with the gay community, and who reported higher levels of perceived exclusivity on the part of the gay community were less likely to be using recommended antiretroviral regimens.

SOURCE: Stall, R., et al. (2001). Use of antiretroviral therapies among HIV-infected men who have sex with men: A household-based sample of 4 major American cities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91, 767-773.

## Self-collected vaginal swabs detect undiagnosed STDs

Eighteen percent of teenage girls from two Pittsburgh-area high schools who self-collected a single vaginal swab tested positive for trichomoniasis, chlamydia, or gonorrhea. Half of infected students would not have pursued traditional examinations if self-collection was not offered. Nearly all stated that they would test frequently if self-testing were available.

SOURCE: Wiesenfeld, H.C., et al. (2001). Self-collection of vaginal swabs for the detection of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and trichomoniasis. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 28, 321-325.

## Many STD clinic patients have depression

Of 125 patients at an STD clinic in Baltimore, 51.9% of women and 31.9% of men were likely to have probable depression. These high depression rates comprise the success of risk reduction counseling.

SOURCE: Erbeling, E. J., et al. (2001). High rates of depressive symptoms in STD clinic patients. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 28, 281-284.

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The opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the cooperating universities.

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