



Spermicide may increase HIV risk during anal sex

Last Updated: 2002-09-26 17:00:56 -0400 (Reuters Health)

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Health experts are banding together to get the message out that using sexual lubricants that contain the spermicide nonoxynol-9 during anal sex may actually increase a person's risk of contracting HIV.

What's more, they say that many people who use condoms lubricated with nonoxynol-9 may be under the false impression that the spermicide helps protect them from infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). There is no published scientific evidence to support this notion.

Nonoxynol-9 is a common ingredient in sexual lubricants, condoms and contraceptive products designed exclusively for vaginal use such as diaphragm jelly, contraceptive foams and creams.

While early studies suggested that nonoxynol-9 may thwart HIV transmission, new findings indicate that the opposite may be true.

Recent research has found that using nonoxynol-9 during anal sex can damage the cells that line the rectum, making it easier for a person to contract HIV and other STDs, noted Lori Heise, director of the Global Campaign for Microbicides.

"As we became more concerned with the HIV epidemic, there was increased pressure to add nonoxonyl-9 to products as a way to potentially offer protection against HIV," Heise said at a press conference Thursday.

"Unfortunately we now know...that nonoxonyl-9 does not work to prevent HIV or STD transmission," she added.

Both the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently issued reports cautioning would-be users that nonoxynol-9 does not prevent the spread of STDs including HIV and should not be used as a means to prevent infection with HIV, Heise noted.

Informing the public of the new findings will take a massive educational campaign, she told attendees.

However, there is no reason for people who use birth control products or sexual lubricants during vaginal sex as a means of birth control to stop using nonoxynol-

9, she added, but they should keep in mind that nonoxynol-9 will not confer an anti-HIV or anti-STD benefit.

The organization is asking manufacturers to stop adding nonoxynol-9 to sexual lubricants and condoms, and they are calling on retailers to voluntarily discontinue stocking these products.

Heise said that the Global Campaign for Microbicides is calling on all healthcare professionals to spread the message "that nonoxynol-9 should not be used rectally and that it does not help prevent STD and HIV."

The new findings should cause groups to redouble their efforts to find substances that can be used vaginally or rectally to help prevent HIV or STDs, noted Heise.

According to a press release, the Global Campaign for Microbicides is an international coalition of organizations working to accelerate access to new HIV prevention options, headquartered at the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health in Washington, DC.

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