

Some condom makers to halt production of nonoxynol-9 products

Some U.S. condom makers have announced that they will soon stop production and sale of products that contain the spermicide nonoxynol-9 because of studies showing that the compound makes it easier to be infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, *The Wall Street Journal* reports. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization announced in June that nonoxynol-9 does not prevent STD infections, as some health experts had previously suggested. But the three largest condom manufacturers, including industry leader Armkel LLC, which produces the Trojan line of condoms, say they do not plan to pull their nonoxynol-9-containing products from the market.

A spokesman for Johnson & Johnson said the company will phase out its condoms containing nonoxynol-9 by early next year. The company in July stopped producing its personal lubricant KY Plus, which contained nonoxynol-9, because of lagging sales. Mayer Laboratories also plans to stop producing products containing nonoxynol-9 later this year, and Planned Parenthood has announced it will stop distributing condoms that contain the compound.

Richard Kline, vice president for marketing at Armkel, said his company will continue to produce and market Trojan condoms that contain nonoxynol-9, but he said the company is working with the Food and Drug Administration to improve label warnings for the products. He said the nonoxynol-9-treated condoms are "an important product for women as a backup contraceptive."

Scientists, public health advocates, gay rights groups, AIDS organizations, and some women's groups plan to launch a public awareness campaign about the STD and HIV risks associated with nonoxynol-9 next month. They hope to pressure companies to pull their products containing the compound from the market. "In the interest of public health, the safest thing to do is eliminate nonoxynol-9 condoms and lubricants from the market," said campaign organizer Lori Heise of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health.