

Attn Gen Z: It's International Condom Day 2024

Since 1990, condoms have averted over 117M HIV cases. They remain the only tool that prevents HIV, STIs and unplanned pregnancy all in one.

February 13, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

It's the season of love, and Tuesday, February 13, marks International Condom Day 2024, a time to celebrate [condoms](#), the only tool that can prevent [HIV](#), unplanned pregnancy and [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) all in one.

This year, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) wants to get the word out to Gen Z, "a generation obsessed with the online but not lost to the real world," as the young population is described in a special WHO video titled "Celebrating Condoms" (you can watch it at the top of this article or [on YouTube](#)).



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In a related [fact sheet](#), the WHO lays out key data points about condoms:

- Condoms have had a significant impact on the global AIDS pandemic: Model simulations show that increased condom use since 1990 has averted an estimated 117 million new HIV infections.
- In 2020, 374 million new STI infections occurred globally among adults ages 15–49 with 1 of the 4 curable STIs: syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea and trichomoniasis. The majority of these could be prevented with the correct use of condoms.
- Ninety-eight percent of women whose male partners use male condoms correctly in every sex act over one year will be protected from unplanned pregnancy; when female condoms are used, 95% of them will be protected against unplanned pregnancy.
- Research from the WHO, HRP and partners from February 2022 indicates that interventions that use positive language about sex, including sexual pleasure, are effective in increasing condom use.
- Nonjudgmental, person-centered information should be provided to support condom use.
- Gender inequities, especially in intimate relationships, is a major barrier for condom use and should be addressed.



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It's important to raise awareness of condoms and other elements of sexual health. Last month, the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's STI report](#) showed that syphilis rates are rising dramatically. In fact, it reported 207,255 cases in 2022, an 80% increase since 2018. The report also found 1.6 million cases of chlamydia (a 6.2% decrease since 2018) and 648,056 cases of gonorrhea (an 11% increase since 2018).

Regarding [HIV rates in the United States](#), there were an estimated 32,100 new cases in 2021, which marks a 12% decline from 36,500 in 2017. In total, about 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the United States. HIV rates are disproportionately higher among Black and brown minorities, gay and bisexual men and people who live in the South.

The WHO overview on condoms clarifies that:

“There are both external (male) condoms and internal (female) condoms (also called external condoms and internal condoms, respectively), which are effective when used correctly. External condoms are most common and are sheaths or coverings that fit over a man's erect penis before penetration. Internal condoms are also available and are sheaths or linings that fit loosely inside the vagina before penetration.

“[When using condoms](#), personal lubricants (also known as lube) make it less likely that the condom will break, slip or fall off, which increases protection against unintended pregnancy and most STIs, including HIV. Use of a water- or silicone-based lube is recommended, as other types may cause the condom to break down, such as kitchen oil, butter and hand lotion.

“[Lubricants](#) can make sex with a condom satisfying and effective, during vaginal and particularly anal sex. Unlike the vagina or penis, the anus often does not provide adequate

natural lubrication during sex. Plenty of lubricant should always be used during anal sex. Lubricants may also be helpful for individuals experience vaginal dryness associated with menopause. In general, lubricant use is associated with reduced sexual pain and discomfort, and improved female sexual satisfaction.”

Of course, condoms aren’t the only way to prevent HIV. To learn about other methods, including pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP), see the [POZ Basics on HIV Prevention](#).

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