

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

This year, Campus Health is celebrating 90 years of service here at the UA, having been founded during the influenza epidemic of 1918.

Q. I heard that nonoxynol-9 (used on spermicidal condoms) can cause vaginal irritation and increase the risk of infections, while not providing any extra protection. Is it true? And what should one do if an irritation occurs?

A. It's true that spermicides like nonoxynol-9, which act by killing, blocking or immobilizing sperm, can cause vaginal irritation or allergic reactions for a small number of individuals. You are also correct in asserting that condoms with a spermicidal lubricant offer no extra protection than condoms alone.

Because of the lack of additional pregnancy protection, as well as an association with vaginal irritation, urinary tract infections (UTIs) and yeast infections in some women, there is really no good reason to use condoms lubricated with nonoxynol-9. Of course, if you have to choose between a condom with spermicide and no condom at all, the decision is easy: use the condom.

On the other hand, spermicide that is packaged and sold separately as a cream, foam, film, suppository or gel is about 75-85% effective at preventing pregnancy when used as directed. Just remember that spermicide works well when it is sold by itself, not as an add-on to a condom. If this range of effectiveness doesn't sound good enough, using a stand-alone spermicide in addition to a male or female condom will reduce the chance of pregnancy even further, with the extra benefit of STD protection.

Should you or your partner experience irritation from spermicide use, try switching to another brand. If the irritation persists, consider one of the many other birth control options available and find one that works well for you.

The Campus Health Service Pharmacy offers Vaginal Contraceptive Film (VCF) spermicide, with 12 films for \$12.99. Male and female condoms and Plan B emergency contraception are also available without a prescription. For more information call 621-6516 or stop by Campus Health at the Highland Commons Building near 6th St. and Highland Ave.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., CHES and David Salafsky, MPH, health educators at The University of Arizona Campus Health Service.

