



Here's a headline you probably didn't see lately: "Massive U.S. Government Study Finds That Condoms Don't Work."

If that were the case, you'd think it would be pretty big news, wouldn't you? It would make headlines, what with all of the people relying on "safe sex" and their Planned Parenthood-issued condoms to keep them happy and disease-free.

Not so, my friends, not so.

You see, this is the case. On July 20, a report was issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A scientific panel co-sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), developed the report. It was based on a yearlong study in which 28 researchers reviewed 138 peer-reviewed, published studies on the heterosexual transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

Their findings were stunning. Basically, it boils down to this: There is no evidence to indicate that condoms prevent the heterosexual transmission of most sexually transmitted diseases. None.

The panel studied condom effectiveness in preventing the eight most prevalent sexually transmitted diseases: HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, chancroid, trichomoniasis, genital herpes, and human papillomavirus (HPV). Condoms were not found to provide universal protection against any of these diseases.

When used "correctly and consistently," condoms were found to reduce heterosexual HIV infection rate by 85 percent. (Which still leaves a 15 percent infection rate – not a good stat for a deadly disease.) They also found that condom use reduced the risk of gonorrhea, but only in men.

For all of the other diseases, zilch. Nothing. There is no evidence that the condom does anything to prevent transmission of these diseases.

And here's the kicker. The two diseases that the condom may offer some protection against constitute only 2 percent of all heterosexual STD cases in America. Two percent. This means that, based on overwhelming evidence, the condom does nothing to protect against 98 percent of all cases of heterosexually transmitted disease in America today.

(Of course, the question comes up. Why didn't they study homosexual transmission as well? Honestly, I don't know. Maybe they're planning to do a separate study. I do know, however, that most studies I've seen show condom failure rates tend to be higher in homosexual activity.)

I know what some of you are thinking. "Okay, so it doesn't prevent most diseases. But it helps prevent AIDS. And that's the only deadly one, right?" Wrong. Let's talk about the human papillomavirus (HPV). Twenty million Americans are infected, making this the most common sexually transmitted disease in America today. The primary symptom is genital warts. But these are not harmless little warts. They are often pre-cancerous growths. HPV is the cause of nearly all cervical cancer and has also been linked to prostate, anal and oral cancer. Fifteen thousand women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year, and every year 5,000 women die from the disease. Hundreds of thousands of other women will be diagnosed and treated for pre-cancerous conditions.

As for the condom: "For HPV, the panel concluded that there was no epidemiological evidence that condom use reduced the risk of HPV." The same goes for herpes, chlamydia, chancroid, trichomoniasis and syphilis.

Apparently, the results of the study were so disturbing that, according to The Washington Post, "some health officials considered keeping the report private." Can you believe that? They were sitting on information that could affect the lives and deaths of literally millions of Americans, and they were going to sit on it. Some "health" officials.

When the results did come out, it must've been a pretty big punch in the gut to the "safe sex" establishment. Their careers, their crusades, their entire lives are built around the assumption that condoms protect us from sexually transmitted diseases. The shock is evident in the quotes we're hearing from them.

Jeff Spieler, an official at the U.S. Agency for International Development, told The Washington Post, "As somebody who is completely devoted to improving public health, I know that any message that minimizes the role and importance of correct and consistent condom use can have an extremely negative effect on preventing HIV and other STDs."

The same Washington Post article went on to say, "Some family planning advocates said they feared that the new report would be used to put pressure on the FDA to change condom labels to reflect the conclusions."

It's like hearing that Grandma died and immediately asking if Grandma will be making brownies for the funeral. The reality of the loss just hasn't sunk in yet. Personally, I'm not remotely surprised. I've known for years that condoms are ineffective at preventing most STDs. I saw the studies when I was writing my book *Real Love* six years ago. To me, it seemed irrational to rely on condoms in the first place. Many of these diseases are transmitted by "contact points" that aren't even covered by a condom under the best of conditions. Warts and herpes sores aren't limited to such a small, confined area. And latex is not a solid substance. It contains small, microscopic "holes" up to 5 microns wide — easily wide enough for most viruses to pass through intact. Add breakage, slippage and leakage to the equation, and you don't exactly have a recipe for solid sexual safety.

Perhaps the most outrageous claim, made in *The Washington Post* by someone who (for obvious reasons you'll understand when you see the quote), said, "It is extremely important that the public understand the difference between data being inadequate and condoms being inadequate."

Our friend Jeff Spieler backed that up when he said that there is no reason to believe that the condom isn't effective against the diseases the study said it isn't effective against. They're all saying that, if we just look hard enough, we'll find evidence to exonerate the poor maligned condom.

Excuse me? Here we have no less than 138 peer-reviewed, published medical studies showing that condoms don't prevent these diseases. Those 138 studies are full of people — living, breathing human beings — who were infected while using condoms that society told them would protect them. Many of them, as a result of that misplaced trust, are probably no longer living or breathing.

How much more evidence do they need? So how do we keep ourselves safe? There is a very simple recipe. Save sex for marriage. Marry an uninfected partner. And remain faithful. That, my friends, is safe sex.

Source: Bonacci is a frequent lecturer on chastity. Copyright ©2001 Arlington Catholic Herald www.catholicherald.com/