

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Condom use is a critical element in a comprehensive, effective and sustainable approach to HIV prevention and treatment. Prevention is the mainstay of the response to AIDS.

**London, UK (January 27, 2013)** - The search for new preventive technologies such as HIV vaccines and microbicides continues to make progress, but condoms will remain the key preventive tool for many, many years to come.

Conclusive evidence from extensive research among heterosexual couples in which one partner is infected with HIV shows that correct and consistent condom use significantly reduces the risk of HIV transmission from both men to women, and also from women to men.

Effective condom promotion targets not only the general population, but also people at higher risk of HIV exposure, especially women, young people, sex workers and their clients, injecting drug users and men who have sex with men. UNFPA estimates that the current supply of condoms in low- and middle-income countries falls well short of the number required (the condom 'gap').

Despite the gap, international funding for condom procurement has not increased in recent years. Collective actions at all levels are needed to support efforts of countries, especially those that depend on external assistance for condom procurement, promotion and distribution. HIV prevention education and condom promotion must overcome the challenges of complex gender and cultural factors.

Young girls and women are regularly and repeatedly denied information about, and access to, condoms. Often they do not have the power to negotiate the use of condoms. In many social contexts, men are resistant to the use of condoms. However, women will remain highly vulnerable to HIV exposure, until men and women share equal decision-making powers in their interpersonal relationships.

Promotion of correct and consistent condom use within antiretroviral treatment programs, and within reproductive health and family planning services, is essential to reduce further opportunities for HIV transmission. Rapid scale-up of HIV testing and counselling is needed to meet the prevention needs of all people, whether they are HIV-positive or negative.

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