



cover the world with condoms

Help fight HIV/AIDS

Thankyou for requesting Marie Stopes International's HIV/AIDS action pack.

As a reader of The Guardian/Marie Stopes International supplement on global HIV/AIDS issues, you will appreciate the severity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic across the developing world.

The statistics defy our imaginations:

- more than 40 million people are currently living with HIV or AIDS¹
- some 14,000 people a day become infected with HIV
- one third of these are young people aged 15-24
- six people die from an AIDS-related illness every minute¹
- one third of all 15-year-old boys currently living in some areas of Africa will die from AIDS²
- in some countries, over 40% of the population is HIV-positive².

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by such evidence and wonder what can really be done to make a difference. But something can be done and **you** can help.

The vast majority of HIV infections are sexually transmitted – AND THEREFORE PREVENTABLE. Condoms are the single most effective way people can protect themselves from HIV/AIDS transmission. They **must** be easily available to all who need them. For the spread of HIV infections to be slowed, the international community must act quickly to mount large-scale comprehensive prevention efforts that support the promotion and distribution of condoms.

You can make a difference by joining this campaign to alert MPs to a shocking truth – that countless thousands of people are dying from AIDS because of a global shortage in condom supplies.

Government action is urgently needed to increase the availability of condoms in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As your elected representative, your MP is duty bound to listen to your concerns. As a constituent, your voice **will** influence your MP.

After you have read the rest of this pack, please respond by sending the enclosed card, which contains a condom to symbolise the shortage, to your MP. So help fight HIV/AIDS – send your MP a condom today.

This pack contains other suggestions and campaigning ideas. If you act on these suggestions, or if you only send off the condom card, you will be taking decisive, positive action in the global fight against HIV/AIDS – effective local action that **can** lead to global change.

¹ UNAIDS/WHO. 2003. *AIDS epidemic update: December 2003*.

² Population Action International. 2002. *Condoms Count*.

There's a worldwide shortage of affordable condoms to fight HIV/AIDS.

And **you** can do something about it!

Fight the spread of HIV/AIDS by sending your MP a condom to symbolise the shortage – using the special Marie Stopes International condom card inside this pack.

Marie Stopes International is one of the world's leading providers of sexual and reproductive health services and information.

We work with 3.6 million people in 35 countries, upholding their right to choose the timing, spacing and size of their families.

Marie Stopes International is amongst the top 10 contributors to HIV/AIDS work in developing countries worldwide.

For further information visit www.mariestopes.org.uk

And send your MP a condom now!

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Counting the human cost

“AIDS today in Africa is claiming more lives than the sum total of all wars, famines and floods, and the ravages of such deadly diseases as malaria” Nelson Mandela, International AIDS Conference, Paris. 2003.

Consider the facts

- in the next minute six people worldwide will die of AIDS³
- by this time tomorrow 14,000 more people will be infected with HIV³
- in the next decade, AIDS will kill more people than all the wars and natural disasters of the past 50 years put together.

We could go on... adding statistic on statistic to show that HIV/AIDS is the biggest health challenge we've ever faced as a global community.

But numbers only tell half the story.

They don't show the children trying to care for their younger siblings because both parents have died of AIDS.

Or women in the poorest countries – unable to make ends meet because their husbands are dead.

Or overcrowded hospital wards filled with AIDS patients, with little or nothing to treat them.

Or babies, born with HIV because their HIV-positive mothers don't have access to a simple medication that would keep their babies safe.

Confronted by numbers, it's too easy to forget that every statistic is a life, a child, a family grieving, a future wiped out, a livelihood destroyed.

And so far not one person in the world has been cured.

Faced with this level of human suffering, people across the globe must have access to the **single most effective technology that prevents HIV/AIDS.**

The condom.

Useful links

- the United Nations' programme on HIV/AIDS
www.unaids.org
- the World Health Organisation
www.who.int
- the National AIDS Trust (UK)
www.worldaidsday.org

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shortfall

Nothing for the weekend?

Many of us have used condoms. Almost a quarter of UK adults use condoms as their main form of contraceptive.⁴

We get them from chemists or vending machines, from family planning clinics and health centres, and even with our weekly supermarket shop – without thinking twice.

But imagine there weren't any to be had. None in the machines, none in the shops, none in bars and pubs. None to be had – anywhere.

That's the crisis facing millions of people in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America every day.

Young people, single adults, married couples. People who know that a condom can protect them against HIV/AIDS, as well as unwanted pregnancy.

If they can get one.

Condoms are at the heart of the fight to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. They are a simple and affordable, life-saving technology.

Yet the international donor community is providing less than five condoms per man in Africa each year. In Botswana, where 39% of adults are infected with HIV, the average man gets less than one condom per year from international donors.⁵

In 2000, around eight billion condoms were needed worldwide for HIV/AIDS prevention, yet less than one billion were donated.⁵

If it costs just 2p to produce a condom, why are there too few condoms, and why aren't they getting to the people who need them?

This pack explains why, and what you can do to help.

- the oldest condoms ever found date back to 1640 and were excavated near Birmingham⁶
- condom shops first appeared in the 1700s
- the reservoir tip was added to the condom in the early 1950s
- more than 70 million condoms are sold in the UK each year⁶
- in 2000, around eight billion condoms were needed worldwide, yet only one billion were donated⁵
- in 2005, around 13 billion condoms will be needed.

⁴ www.eddystone.org.uk

⁵ Population Action International. 2002. *Condoms Count*.

⁶ Information Resources International.

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proof

Condoms – the one technology that works against HIV

The wildfire spread of HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest health challenges facing the world today. Yet we *can* halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, *if* we take resolute action now.

Condoms, correctly used, are scientifically proven to be 99.9% effective in protecting against HIV transmission⁷

Readily available condoms have successfully slowed the spread of HIV in, for example, Uganda, Brazil and Thailand.

- in Uganda, a government-backed information campaign promoting condom use saw the incidence of HIV amongst 15 – 49 year-olds drop from 21% to 10% in just four years⁸
- in Brazil, the incidence of HIV amongst teenage boys fell significantly following a campaign to promote condom use, coupled with the distribution of subsidised or free condoms⁹
- in Thailand, the prevalence of HIV fell between 1997 and 2001 as a result of condom-led prevention campaigns amongst sex workers and their clients.

Condoms, correctly used, are the best way for sexually active people to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS. And with a production cost of less than 2p a piece, condoms are a cheap means of preventing HIV infection.

So why aren't we supplying enough?

- the **abc** against HIV/AIDS: abstain from sex; **b**e faithful to a partner; and use condoms
- it costs less than 2p to manufacture a condom, including the cost of testing and shipping
- in Cambodia, promoting condom use helped to reduce the HIV infection rate from 3.9 percent to 2.8 percent in three years.⁹

7 Mastro T., di Vincenzi I. 1996. Probabilities of sexual HIV 1 transmission. *AIDS*;10 (suppl A): S75-S82.

8 Population Action International. 2002. *Condoms Count*.

9 *ibid*.

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p litics

Help us fill the condom gap

Across the world, men, women and children will die from AIDS because not enough condoms are reaching the people who need them now.

- eight billion subsidised condoms were needed in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe in 2000. But less than one billion were donated by the United Nations, USA, UK and other countries
- since 1996, the number of condoms donated by the international community has fallen from around 1.5 billion a year to less than one billion a year¹⁰
- the US has stopped providing condoms to 29 developing countries since 2000.¹¹

The US government now actively promotes ‘abstinence-only’ programmes, encouraging people **not** to have sex, rather than practise safer sex using condoms. And they are donating fewer condoms as a result.

Between 1991 and 2000, the spending on condoms by the US Agency for International Development, the world’s largest donor of condoms, dropped by 38%.¹²

10 Population Action International. 2002. *Condoms Count*.

11 Population Action International. 2003. *Access Denied*.

But there is no evidence that abstinence-only programmes work.¹³ Promises to abstain from sex are likely to fail more frequently than condoms.

If the US looks set to supply fewer and fewer condoms, the UK government and others must step in to fill the condom gap.

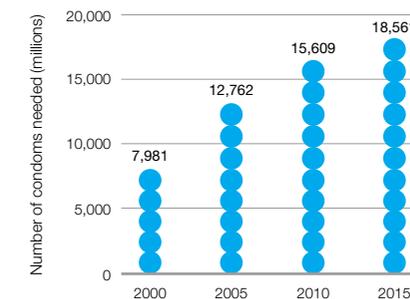
Experts estimate that by 2005 we will need 13 billion condoms to meet the need for preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the developing world and Eastern Europe (see chart, right).¹⁰

By sending the condom card to your MP you can help persuade them to increase UK efforts and influence the international community to fill the condom gap... so that people don’t die for lack of a 2p condom.

12 USAID. 2003. *www.usaid.gov*

13 Kirkby, D. & Korpi, M. 1997. *The impact of postponing sexual involvement curriculum among youths in California*. Family Planning Perspectives, May/June 1997.

Projected number of condoms needed for HIV/STI prevention in the developing world and Eastern Europe, 2000–2015



Source
UNFPA. 2002. *Global estimates of contraceptive commodities and condoms for STI/HIV prevention, 2000-2015*. New York: UNFPA.

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provision

If cigarettes can get everywhere, why can't condoms?

If cigarettes and cans of cola can reach the remotest corners of the planet, why can't condoms?

We have the capacity to manufacture all the condoms the world needs – if governments donate enough money. But there are other challenges too – including distribution and education.

Ordering, shipping, storing and distributing condoms worldwide are complex challenges:

- exposure to heat and humidity can reduce the shelf-life of condoms
- it can take a year from the time an order is placed until the condoms are delivered
- wealthier urban areas may get the condoms they need, leaving poorer people in more remote rural areas unable to find or afford to buy them.

Donor countries must therefore offer logistical support as well as money to buy condoms.

New marketing techniques are urgently needed. In some areas for example, condoms can be **sold** at below market price. The money can then be used to buy and market more condoms, including free condoms for people who need them but can't afford to pay for them.

Information and education programmes are essential to break down the social and cultural barriers to condom use. Many education programmes still fail to promote condoms adequately or teach people how to use them effectively.

But improved information and education will only work if there are regular supplies of condoms too.

Make sure that condom supplies to prevent HIV/AIDS do not drop down the government agenda. Send your MP the condom card today.

- condoms are now being sold at below market price in more than 50 developing countries¹⁴
- making condoms available through non-traditional outlets (such as via taxi drivers, bars and peer educators) makes them more attractive to young people
- condoms can also cut the number of unwanted pregnancies, miscarriages and abortions – leading to major health benefits for the world's poorest women.

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action

Make sure your MP gets the point

Send your MP the condom card inside this pack and make sure that he or she gets the point – that we need to dramatically increase the supply of affordable condoms to developing countries to help slow the spread of HIV/AIDS and save lives.

This is your chance to take effective action against one of the biggest health threats the world has seen.

Make sure you write your name and address on the card, to get a personal response from your MP and ensure your MP takes the request seriously.

You can also send them a letter repeating the case and asking for their reply. You can find some sample letters by visiting the global campaigns page on our website:
www.mariestopes.org.uk

You can find your MP's name and constituency address on the internet by logging on to <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/aristotle> or by telephoning 020 7219 4272 and giving your postcode.

Alternatively, if you know your MP's name, you can write care of House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.

Other things you can do

As your elected representative, your MP will meet you to discuss issues of concern to you. Why not visit your MP's surgery or ask to visit them at the House of Commons?

Or get together with others to start an activist group.
Visit www.mariestopes.org.uk for details.

And do please let us know what you do so that we can monitor the effects of the campaign.

Once you've sent the condom card please call us on 020 7574 7421 to let us know, or email condoms@mariestopes.org.uk

- only 42% of those in need worldwide have access to condoms¹⁵
- only one in five HIV-positive people has access to methods of stopping transmission to others¹⁵
- annual global spending on HIV prevention will fall \$3.8 billion short of what will be needed by 2005¹⁵
- despite increasing need, annual donor support through both spending and numbers of condoms has remained stagnant over the past decade, averaging just over one billion condoms.¹⁶

¹⁵ Global HIV Prevention Working Groups. 2003.
Access to HIV Prevention: Closing the Gap.

¹⁶ UNAIDS/Population Action International. 2002.

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**this card contains the single
most effective technology in
the fight against HIV/AIDS**

...now all we need are twelve billion,
nine hundred and ninety nine million
nine hundred and ninety nine thousand
nine hundred and ninety nine more*

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*Based on 2005 estimates of global demand for condoms (UNFPA, 2002.).

Across the developing world people are dying because they can't get hold of affordable condoms.

A simple condom is the most effective technology we have to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

There are now worldwide shortages of affordable, quality condoms, leading inevitably to additional infection by HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.

But the international community now supplies **fewer** subsidised condoms than in the mid 1990s. In 2000, around eight billion condoms were needed worldwide for HIV/AIDS prevention. But less than one billion were donated by the international community.

The UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) estimates that by 2005, 13 billion condoms will be needed to meet demands from developing world and Eastern European countries.†

To make a high-quality condom costs just 2p. I ask you to urge HM Government to take every action possible to make sure that people at risk in the developing world do not die for lack of a 2p condom.

For further details and evidence visit the global campaigns page at www.maristopes.org.uk

† Population Action International. 2002. *Condoms Count*.

As my elected representative, I request that you make representations to HM Government to continue to take a lead in encouraging the international donor community to ensure that affordable condoms are readily available across the developing world, and to resist any international pressure to endorse abstinence only programmes.

Please respond to me at the address below:

Name

Address

Email

Condoms generously donated by 

Affix
first class
stamp
