

## Study shows a common spermicide may increase risk of contracting HIV

DURBAN, South Africa (AP) — The widely used spermicide nonoxynol-9, long recommended as a way to stop the spread of AIDS, may actually increase the risk of catching the virus, at least among women who use it frequently, according to the surprising findings of a large study.

As a result, health officials said condoms

used solely to prevent disease should not be coated with nonoxynol-9, although a condom with the spermicide is certainly safer than no condom at all. And they said the spermicide should also not be used as birth control by anyone at high risk of catching HIV.

Nonoxynol-9 is widely used around the world for contraception, and about one-third

of lubricated condoms sold in the United States are covered with it. Nonoxynol-9 is a detergent formulated to kill sperm, but in the test tube it also wipes out HIV, and many have long assumed it helps protect people from the virus.

However, a study on prostitutes released Wednesday at the 13th International AIDS Conference showed just the opposite: Women

using a nonoxynol-9 gel increased their risk of contracting HIV rather than lowering it.

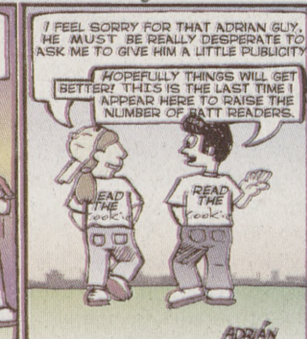
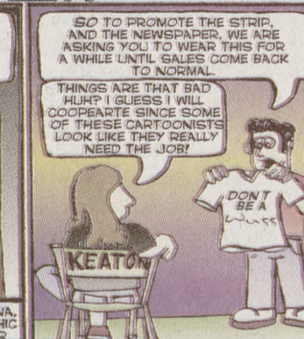
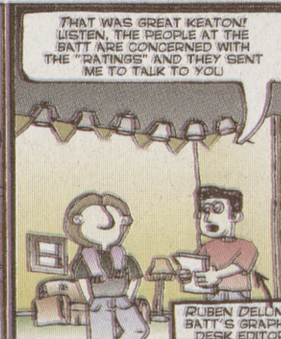
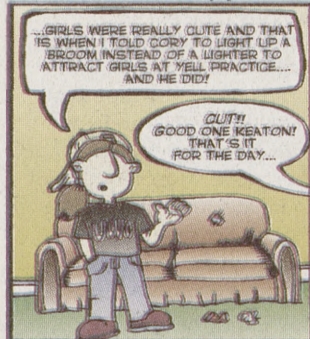
"It is an understatement to say that we were extremely disappointed," said Dr. Lut Van Damme of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, the study's director.

The researchers now assume that nonoxynol-9, or N-9, increases the risk by irri-

tating the vaginal lining, causing tears that the virus a way to enter the body.

The prostitutes in the study applied N-9 to 20 times a day, and there is no evidence that women who use it once or twice a day increase their risk of HIV. Nevertheless, Van Damme recommended that N-9's long-term safety as a contraceptive be re-evaluated.

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OW

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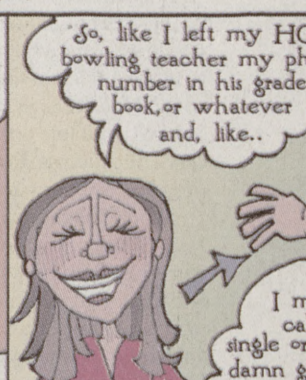
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