Changing Times

Nowadays, more women buy condoms without worrying.

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Celibacy aside, prophylactics are are the only way that individuals can protect themselves against pregnancy and reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—including gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis and HIV—that are spread by genital fluids. However, for women especially, buying condoms has been a key problem, in part because of shame. But according to recent findings from a national survey on sexual health and behavior conducted by Indiana University in partnership with condom maker Trojan, when seeing a woman purchasing prophylactics, 96 percent of people think she's being responsible and smart or don't think it's any of their business.

"We certainly saw on our survey that most people feel just fine about women buying condoms," said Debby Herbenick, MPH, PhD, a professor at the Indiana University School of Public Health. "There were a lot of positives about both women and men being proactive about safer sex."

Nevertheless, some women still feel self-conscious about purchasing these safer-sex products. As a result, a few condom manufacturers are working on designing packaging that helps women feel comfortable when purchasing their products. "It's important to remember that while men wear the condom, women use it too," says Stephanie Berez, the group brand manager for XOXO by Trojan.

"The sexual health in this country is not where we need to be," Berez adds. "STIs are on the rise."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, condoms offer maximum protection against these illnesses when they're used consistently and correctly. "It would be great if more women saw purchasing condoms as part of what they can do to be a sexually healthy person," Herbenick says.

"Now everybody can latch on to the fact that a condom is a responsible symbol for pleasure and sexual health," Berez says.

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