Triple Threat

A novel contraceptive device that is now being tested would simultaneously protect women against HIV and herpes.

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Women are known for their ability to do many things at once. And now scientists are preparing to test a multitasking intravaginal ring that would offer women even more control over their sexual health.

The innovative intravaginal ring was presented at a meeting of pharmaceutical scientists last October in San Antonio, Texas. The device is the first multipurpose pregnancy and disease prevention technology of its kind to be clinically tested.

The ring combines the contraceptive drug levonorgestrel with the HIV med tenofovir. The two drugs would team to stop unwanted pregnancy and protect against HIV and herpes simplex virus 2 (HSV-2) for up to three months.

The ring dispenses a specific, controlled amount of the meds in the body for up to 90 days. “Our hope is that this ring will offer a solution to increase adherence, and therefore provide greater protection against HIV while also preventing pregnancy,” says David Friend, PhD, the product development director at Contraception Research and Development, a leading reproductive health research organization based in Arlington, Virginia.

Doctors are optimistic that the ring would protect the health of women and their partners, especially in locations where HIV prevalence is high, such as sub-Saharan Africa.

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