How to increase condom use

Marketing campaigns can double the likelihood of condom use, according to a study published this month in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. The study showed that people were twice as likely to use condoms, on average, if they were exposed to marketing methods, such as an effective supply of locally-branded condoms, compared to those who had not come across marketing campaigns. Similar results were also found when analysing condom use in the most recent sexual encounters. Condom use again increased significantly, with rates almost twice as high on average, after they had been targeted at consumers in a marketing drive.

The research – the first of its kind - was based on all available evidence contained in six studies carried out in India and sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 and 2010, and involving more than 23,000 people.

Michael Sweat, one of the lead authors of the research from the Medical University of South Carolina, said: “Condom social marketing was associated with a doubling of condom use in communities. This is impressive, and demonstrates the need to maintain access to low-cost and free condoms in developing countries.”

“The findings underline the importance of using condoms and the need to continually increase awareness and access to condoms through targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with local consumers and help bring about a change in behavior,” added Dr Sweat.
The analysis was done through a collaboration with researchers from the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Switzerland, together with staff from the Medical University of South Carolina, Family Health International and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, all in the USA.

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The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* is one of the world’s leading public health journals. It is the flagship periodical of WHO, with a special focus on developing countries. Articles are peer-reviewed and are independent of WHO guidelines. Abstracts are now available in the six official languages of the United Nations.

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- Counting the cost of calories
- Lessons from Fukushima
- Biomedical engineering in disaster management

The August issue table of contents can be found at: [http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/90/8/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/90/8/en/index.html)


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