



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

June 12, 2001

Dear Colleague:

In August 2000, Dr. Helene Gayle of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sent you a letter about the results of a study involving HIV prevention in women that was presented at the International AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa (enclosed). The study, conducted by researchers with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), found that nonoxynol-9 (N-9), a product widely used in spermicides, is ineffective against HIV transmission. As a result of these findings, CDC advised that **N-9 should not be recommended as an effective means of HIV prevention.**

Since sending that letter, we have received many questions from staff of state, local, and community HIV and STD prevention programs asking if they should continue distributing already-purchased condoms lubricated with a spermicide containing N-9. We also have received questions about the use of N-9 to prevent HIV transmission through anal sex. This letter provides additional guidance on these two issues.

Condoms and N-9

The UNAIDS researchers conducted their study of N-9 as a possible HIV prevention measure among women who were at very high risk of HIV and who used the N-9 gel frequently. Since there is no evidence that the small amount of N-9 contained in condom lubrication is harmful, distribution of previously purchased condoms should continue, provided the condoms have not passed their expiration date. **We do recommend, however, that you do not purchase any additional condoms lubricated with the spermicide N-9.** These condoms cost more and offer no additional protection against the transmission of HIV.

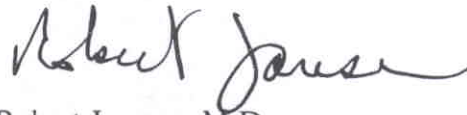
Use of N-9 as a rectal microbicide

Although recent data indicate that N-9 may increase the risk of HIV transmission during vaginal intercourse, similar studies have not been conducted men who have sex with men (MSM) who use N-9 during anal intercourse. We do know that N-9 can cause damage to the cells lining the rectum, thus providing a portal of entry for HIV and other sexually transmissible agents. Therefore, **CDC recommends that N-9 not be used as a microbicide or lubricant during anal intercourse.** Although the level of N-9 used to lubricate condoms is much lower than the level found to be harmful, condoms without N-9 lubrication are recommended because they provide equivalent protection to that provided by N-9 lubricated condoms, at lower cost. However, a condom lubricated with N-9 is clearly preferable to using no condom at all. HIV and STD programs and clinicians should actively educate MSM about this information.

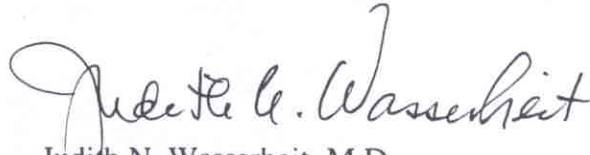
We would appreciate your assistance in sharing this information with others working in HIV and STD prevention.

Thank you for your concern and questions regarding this important prevention topic.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert Janssen in cursive script.

Robert Janssen, M.D.
Director, Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention
National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention

Handwritten signature of Judith N. Wasserheit in cursive script.

Judith N. Wasserheit, M.D.
Director, Division of STD Prevention
National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention

Enclosures: