



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Jeannine Mallory, Public Information Officer
PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
727-824-6908 (media only)

National Condom Week is February 11-17
Consistent and Correct Use of Condoms Can Prevent STDs

Each year in the U.S. approximately 19 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are diagnosed.

However, many individuals with STDs are unaware they've been infected, or that they may potentially infect partners. With this in mind, the Pinellas County Health Department recognizes **National Condom Week 2007 (February 11-17)** and emphasizes the value of safer sex practices. National Condom Day is February 14.

While anyone can contract STDs, about half of all new cases occur among individuals age 15-24 years.

The health department encourages abstinence from sexual intercourse as the most effective way to reduce the risk of all sexually transmitted infections. But for people who choose not to be abstinent, it is essential to understand the importance of using condoms with each episode of sexual intercourse and how to use them correctly

Research has proven that condoms are effective at reducing the risk of acquiring a number of STDs. Condoms can't offer 100 percent protection, but it's clear that correct and consistent use of condoms is the best way for sexually active individuals to reduce the risks of contracting many STDs, including HIV, chlamydia and gonorrhea.

While less is known about how well condoms protect against infections that spread through skin to skin contact, like HPV and herpes, safer sex practices can reduce the risks of contracting these STDs, as well. A recent study found that young women whose male partners used condoms regularly cut their risk of acquiring HPV by 70%.

The health department supports the use of male latex condoms to limit the spread of sexually transmitted infections and their harmful consequences. Condoms are effective when people use them correctly and consistently.

For more information, visit the American Social Health Association at <http://www.ashstd.org>

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The Mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity.