

Female condom is as effective as other barrier contraceptives

By Teri Meeuwse
Higher Education Editor

Both men and women may battle STDs, HIV and the chance of pregnancy with all kinds of contraceptives, including the female

condom.

The Reality Vaginal Pouch, a condom for women, received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in May 1993, allowing the first-of-its-kind

condom to be sold over the counter.

The condom resembles a small, plastic stocking, consisting of a soft, loose-fitting plastic sheath made of polyurethane, a material

that is stronger and thinner than latex, according to a December 1992 supplement to AIDS Alert.

Product studies show the female condom protects against pregnancy and HIV as well as the male condom, diaphragm, cervical cap and contraceptive sponge, Mary Ann Leeper, PhD, said in the article. Leeper is the senior vice president of development for Wisconsin Pharmacal Co. in Jackson, Wisc., which manufactures the product.

The female condom is not disruptive to sex because a woman can insert it minutes or hours before intercourse, Leeper said. Like the male condom, the female condom can be used only once.

Product studies show many

women like the new form of protection, Leeper said. Of 147 women who used it in a study, most found it was easy to insert and comfortable.

However, according to a 1994 article on Forty-Niner Online, the female condom is not popular as once represented because it's "more awkward to use than the male condom," said Donna Diaz, a representative of Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles.

The Reality Vaginal Pouch can be found at Hiron Drug Stores on Franklin Boulevard and on 18th Avenue. The female condoms come in either packs of six, priced at \$14.39, or in packs of three at \$8.49. The condom may be available at other major drug stores.

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