

# The Washington Post

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## Study: DC female condom program likely prevented 23 HIV infections, saved \$6 million

**By Associated Press, Updated: Monday, March 26, 9:24 AM**

WASHINGTON — An effort by the District of Columbia to increase the use of female condoms, the lesser-known equivalent of the male condom, likely prevented 23 new HIV infections and saved taxpayers \$6 million in its first year, according to a new study.

The study, conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the D.C. Department of Health, was published online in the scientific journal *AIDS and Behavior* last week. It says taxpayers saved millions because three out of every four HIV-positive individuals receiving treatment are getting health care through taxpayer-funded programs such as Medicaid. The study was paid for by the Female Health Company, the makers of the female condom.

The study's lead author, David Holtgrave, said the study shows female condoms are an important part of a comprehensive HIV and AIDS prevention program, as well as a "cost-saving investment of public health dollars."

Health officials in the District of Columbia and community groups began to push for increased female condom use and education in 2010. Community groups began handing out hundreds of thousands of the flexible pouches, which are wider than a male condom but similar in length, at information sessions in the city. Officials promoted them on posters on hundreds of city buses, and the pharmacy chain CVS also began selling them at city drugstores.

The cost of the first year of the program was about \$400,000, including the cost for approximately 200,000 condoms, distribution, education and marketing. Since then the city, which has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the country, has given out a total of 500,000 female condoms, and five different community groups are continuing to do education and outreach about them.

About 3 percent of the Washington population over the age of 12 has HIV or AIDS.

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