

## Thai Teens Should Be Able To Buy and Carry Condoms Free Of Stigma

**W** Staff Writer — 5th February 2016



Due to societal and familial pressures, many Thai teens are either too embarrassed to buy and carry condoms, or are specifically not allowed to by their parents.

“Many parents tell their kids to pray for goodness or carry amulets to protect them. But the kids are not allowed to carry condoms,” says Kriangkrai Vachiratamporn, director of *Hormones*.

A survey by the Department of Disease Control (DDC) focusing on safe sex found 76.8 percent of the teenage respondents (aged over 15) had a good understanding of condom use – an almost 10 percent decline on the number who had a good understanding in 2014.

Additionally, nearly half of the respondents said that they felt too shy to even buy condoms.

Of course, this stigma isn't necessarily stopping teenagers engaging in sexual activity; many are just doing it without condoms or without using condoms properly.

At a press conference hosted by the DDC yesterday, Mr Kriangkrai spoke of the need for better education and widespread acceptance of condom use, reports the *Bangkok Post*, claiming that carrying prophylactics would equip teens for future situations and could prevent incidences of risky sex.

During the conference, solutions were proposed to increase condom use amongst Thai teens, such as:

- Increasing access to condoms and sex education
- Reducing stigma over condom use
- Improving material quality of condoms
- Encouraging public-private partnerships to promote regular condom use
- Developing an evaluation system

It's clear that something must be done to encourage safe sex: the number of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Thailand has doubled over the past 10 years, with the number of 10 to 19-year-olds infected increasing five-fold.

A report released by UNICEF in 2014 found that 70 percent of all sexually transmitted HIV infections in Thailand happened in people aged between 15 and 24. As of 2014, 445,504 people were infected with HIV in Thailand.

There are a myriad of reasons for this incline, not limited to the rise in open sexuality, the proliferation of hook-up apps and the open sex trade. While this sexual expression is not intrinsically bad, Thailand must be responsible in increasing sex education and access to condoms in order to support their evolving society, particularly among the young.

It's imperative that society should be opening and welcoming towards condom culture and should be encouraged at every social and age demographic, in order for safe sex to become the norm and for the STI rate to decline.

The DDC distributed around 20 million free condoms last year and developing relationships with the private sector in order to attain a level where condoms are simply a normal part of everyday life.

*Source : <http://whatsonsukhumvit.com/thai-teens-should-be-able-to-buy-and-carry-condoms-free-of-stigma/>*