

Big condoms partly to blame for Thai teen STI spike: ministry

February 12 2015

Thai health officials Thursday said teenagers who are too embarrassed to choose condoms that fit are partly to blame for a recent spike in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among their peers.

In a statement ahead of Valentine's Day—a time when Thai [officials](#) often issue a flurry of warnings about the potential pitfalls of young love—the kingdom's Ministry of Public Health warned that STIs among 10-19 year olds had increased almost five times in the last ten years.

"It is due to the fact that only 43 percent (of [teenagers](#)) use condoms—and also because they choose condoms that are too big for their actual sizes and they are afraid they will be mocked for being too small," the statement said.

The ministry added it planned to spend 47 million baht (\$1.4 million) this year to distribute more than 43 million [condoms](#) to people across the country.

Despite its anything-goes image, Thailand has a conservative streak, meaning that young people are told to abstain from intercourse altogether instead of being educated about using protection.

Experts say that lack of awareness has led to soaring rates of teenage pregnancy and STIs.

According to the United Nations, the birthrate among Thai teenagers was

47 per 1,000 girls from 2006 to 2010—roughly in line with neighbouring Cambodia, but significantly higher than Malaysia's 14.

Doctors have said the true figure is likely to be higher given many Thai teens will seek an abortion, even though the procedure is illegal under almost all circumstances.

Valentine's Day often leads to bouts of concern over these issues. This year officials have called on teenagers to have a special meal or visit temples instead of having sex.

Some Thai officials have called for condom machines to be placed in schools—a plan that has been rejected so far by education chiefs.

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Citation: Big condoms partly to blame for Thai teen STI spike: ministry (2015, February 12) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-big-condoms-partly-blame-thai.html>

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