

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Latex Condom Availability and Education Program in Montgomery County Public School High School Health Rooms

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1 Why are Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) making condoms and STI prevention education available to high school students?

A1 In response to the significant rise in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Montgomery County and especially among 15–29 year old residents, DHHS proposed that condoms and STI prevention education be made available to high school students. The Montgomery County Board of Education adopted a resolution on September 11, 2018, to collaborate with DHHS on strengthening the comprehensive health education curriculum and develop an agreement to make latex condoms and STI prevention education available in all high school health rooms, effective October 1, 2018.

This program aligns with MCPS' broader strategy of providing resources and supports to students to make safe, well-informed choices. Other programs that reinforce this strategy include the annual Choose Respect Montgomery conference that promotes respect in dating relationships and raises awareness of teen dating violence, as well as the comprehensive health education curriculum that emphasizes the life skills of goal-setting; decision making; identifying beliefs, attitudes, and motivations; assessing information; and advocacy for personal, family, and community health.

Q2 How do high school students request condoms?

A2 The high school student will ask to speak with the school community health nurse (SCHN). STI education is considered part of the reproductive health counseling process that includes educating high school students that latex condoms should be used to prevent STIs.

Q3 How many condoms will be distributed to high school health rooms?

A3 DHHS will distribute condoms to high school health rooms each month. Most schools will receive at least 20 small brown paper bags, each of which contains five condoms. The four high schools with Wellness Centers, which routinely provide medical care to students and their families, including testing for STIs, will receive at least 40 bags of five condoms each.

Q4 How many condoms will be made available to high school students who request them?

A4 High school students will receive one bag of five latex condoms per visit.

Q5 What protocol will SCHNs follow when a high school student asks to speak with them about condoms?

A5 DHHS developed a teaching tool on which SCHNs are trained. The teaching points include:

- How the use of latex condoms prevents the transmission of STIs
 - Consistent and correct use of the male latex condom reduces the risk of STI and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmission.
 - Condom use cannot provide absolute protection against any STI. The most reliable ways to avoid transmission of STIs are to abstain from sexual activity, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.
 - To achieve maximum protection by using condoms, they must be used consistently and correctly.
 - The failure of condoms to protect against STI/HIV transmission usually results from inconsistent or incorrect use, rather than product failure.
 - Inconsistent or nonuse can lead to STI acquisition because transmission can occur with a single sex act with an infected partner.
- How to use a condom consistently and correctly
 - A new condom must be used for every act of vaginal, anal and oral sex throughout the entire sex act (from start to finish) and before there is any genital contact.
 - Procedure for correctly using a condom (including how to check the expiration date and for signs that the condom may be compromised).
 - What may reduce the efficacy of the condom to prevent STIs (e.g., use of oil-based lubricants).
- Condom storage
 - Exposure to direct sunlight or fluorescent (tube) light, heat, humidity, moisture, and ozone can considerably shorten the shelf life of male latex condoms.
 - Inspect the condom package for expiration date before use. The condom package should be intact, without stickiness or leaks.
 - Condom packages should not be folded, or exposed to extreme conditions.

High school students also will be provided with two resource documents:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/docs/condomfactsheetinbrief.pdf>.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/male-condom-use.html> (available in multiple languages).

Q6 Will these health room visits be recorded? If so, how?

A6 Yes, all visits to the health room are recorded in the high school student's health records. If the SCHN is present, the visit will be recorded as, "Conference with SCHN." If the SCHN is not present, the SHRT will record the visit as, "Request to see SCHN." The SCHN will maintain a count of how many high school students receive condoms and education on their use to prevent STIs.

- Q7** May parents/guardians request that their child not be provided with condoms or related STI prevention education?
- A7** If high school students request condoms and STI prevention education, their parents/guardians may not request that their student not be provided with condoms or related STI prevention education.¹
- Q8** What happens if my high school student is allergic to latex?
- A8** Any student with a latex allergy will be counseled on alternatives and the SCHN will work to provide access to alternative products.
- Q9** Will health rooms keep a list of which high school students received condoms?
- A9** Health rooms will keep a count of the number of students who receive condoms and STI prevention education. A formal list of students' names will not be maintained.
- Q10** Why do you use the terms, “sexually transmitted infections” and “STIs,” rather than “sexually transmitted diseases” and “STDs?”
- A10** While often used interchangeably, the terms do have different meanings. The term, “sexually transmitted infection” is a broader definition and refers to the fact that the individual has been infected, but the infection has not developed into a disease yet. The infection is the first step that leads to the disease and results from any bacteria, virus, or microbe entering the body and multiplying. An individual with an STI can be asymptomatic for the disease but still infectious and able to transmit the infection to others. It also is possible for an individual with an STI to not develop the disease. Finally, STI often is considered less stigmatizing than STD.²
- Q11** Will parents/guardians be notified when a high school student requests and receives condoms and STI prevention education?
- A11** No. The *Code of Maryland Regulations*, Article Health, Section 20-102 states that, “a minor has the same capacity as an adult to consent to...treatment for or advice about venereal disease, treatment for or advice about pregnancy, treatment for or advice about contraception other than sterilization.”³

¹ <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmStatutesText.aspx?article=ghg§ion=20-102&ext=html&session=2017RS&tab=subject5>

² American Sexual Health (<http://www.ashsexualhealth.org/>).

³ <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmStatutesText.aspx?article=ghg§ion=20-102&ext=html&session=2017RS&tab=subject5>

Q12 What is the protocol if a high school student returns to the health room to request additional condoms?

A12 The high school student and SCHN must complete the same protocol that includes education on the consistent and correct use of condoms to protect against STIs.

Q13 What should school staff members do if a high school student asks about obtaining condoms to prevent STIs?

A13 High school students requesting condoms to prevent STIs will be directed to the health room to talk with the SCHN.

Q14 How does this condom availability and education program complement the Comprehensive Health Education curriculum?

A14 Two of the seven health education content areas established by the Maryland State Department of Education complement this condom availability and education program.

- Family life and human sexuality
- Disease prevention and control

In grades 7, 8, and 10, health education includes units related to prevention and treatment of communicable diseases and STIs. The grade 10 comprehensive health education curriculum includes a unit of disease prevention and control that reviews common STIs and how they are spread. One indicator is the analysis of the “effectiveness of correct and consistent use of condoms in reducing the risk of HIV and other infections by STIs, including HPV.”⁴

The curriculum emphasizes the skills of analyzing influences, accessing information, decision making, self-management, and advocacy so that students are able to gather information and make informed decisions. These are skills that will be valuable in college and career.

Q15 Will condoms be provided to high school students in the school-based health centers located in elementary schools?

A15 The school-based health centers located in elementary schools serve Care for Kids clients that include high-school aged students. If high school students visit a school-based health center to discuss reproductive health and STI prevention, they may be provided with condoms and education on their effective use to prevent STI transmission.

Q16 What about schools or programs that serve a wide age- and grade-range of students, including high school students?

A16 Rock Terrace School, Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents, and the Blair G. Ewing Center serve high school students. The SCHN will verify the grade of enrollment for any student who requests condoms. High school students in these programs (i.e., students who are enrolled in grades 9 through 12) may receive condoms and be educated on their use to prevent STIs.

⁴ [https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/curriculum/health/high/grade10/Grade%2010%20Comprehensive%20Health%20Education%20Indicators%20and%20Objectives\(1\).pdf](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/curriculum/health/high/grade10/Grade%2010%20Comprehensive%20Health%20Education%20Indicators%20and%20Objectives(1).pdf)