

A New Condom in Town, This One Named 'NYC'



Robert Caplin/Bloomberg News

The city distributed 150,000 of its own brand of condoms Wednesday.

By SEWELL CHAN
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With the government's imprimatur and a wrapper inspired by the subways, New York City's first municipally sanctioned condom arrived yesterday, and it was hard to miss, given that city workers and volunteers handed out more than 150,000 of them across the five boroughs.

In June 2005, the city started an Internet-based Free Condom Initiative to provide community and social service organizations with condoms. Since the start of the initiative — intended to reduce the transmission of [sexually transmitted diseases](#) — the number of condoms distributed has soared to 1.5 million a month from about 300,000.

On Valentine's Day last year, the health department announced that it was developing the first New York City-branded condom. That effort culminated in yesterday's mass distribution of the condoms, timed to Valentine's Day, which also happened to be Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)'s 65th birthday.

The new condoms do not bear the official seal of the city, an image of a big apple or an outline of the city's skyline. The black plastic wrapper simply says "NYC condom" on the front, with each letter in a circle, like the letters used by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to denote subway lines. (The authority gave the city permission to use the letters, which are the intellectual property of the subway system.)

Distributed by Ansell Healthcare Products of Dothan, Ala., the condoms handed out yesterday were made in Malaysia and expire in September 2011.

The condoms were handed out at numerous subway stations, including Columbus Circle

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and Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan and Church Avenue on the Q line in Brooklyn. The condoms will be available at more than 100 night spots and retail outlets and are also available in bulk orders to clinics and community groups. Information is at nycccondom.org.

The fashion designer Kenneth Cole joined [AIDS](#) advocacy organizations and the city health commissioner, Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, for an announcement at Mr. Cole's store in Rockefeller Center about the release of the condoms.

While Dr. Frieden noted that condoms can prevent the spread of H.I.V. and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as unintended pregnancies, he added, "Abstinence is fail-safe, and reducing the number of sexual partners reduces risk of infections. But for sexually active people, using a condom is key to staying healthy."

Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association, a conservative group based in Tupelo, Miss., said, "By and large, I agree with what he said. It's a statement that conservatives and liberals should be able to embrace." He added, "Obviously, from a Christian perspective, I would say sex should be saved for marriage, but I understand what he's trying to do."

Tom Zeller Jr. contributed reporting.

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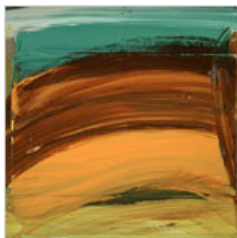
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