

Do Condoms Increase STDs?

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's office yesterday released the annual *Mayor's Management Report*. It shows that the Health Department gave away 39,070,000 male condoms to community groups in fiscal year 2008, which ended June 30. News stories are reporting that this figure is more than double the rate from the previous fiscal year.

What is not being discussed by the media, however, is what the data show regarding the incidence of syphilis: while the distribution of condoms increased by 120 percent in one year, the number of syphilis cases increased by 20 percent.

If condoms are the answer to STDs, then syphilis cases should have declined markedly. The fact that syphilis cases spiked should prove sobering. But, alas, New York City has learned absolutely nothing: next year it plans to distribute 51.6 million condoms. Watch for the rate of STDs to increase as well.

Do condoms increase STDs? It would be difficult to prove that they do, though it is entirely possible that the promiscuous distribution of condoms by government agencies fosters a climate of complacency, one ill-suited to inducing the virtue of self-restraint. One thing is for sure: condom distribution does not curb STDs. Indeed, Mayor Bloomberg is perpetuating a dangerous hoax on young people by ratcheting up condom distribution—even when it is crystal clear that this policy is backfiring.