

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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Romantic and safe

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day, and with the enticing spring weather last week, thoughts of love linger in the minds of many Columbia students. Aside from the romance associated with the holiday and the coming months, however, the hard facts of love and sex remain. The threat of AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and pregnancy does not disappear once the lights are low.

It may seem silly for us to remind everyone once again to use condoms, but many people still do not use them. Condoms are readily available at Columbia—even for free. Columbia University Health Services gives them away, residence counselors are encouraged to keep them in an envelope outside their doors for anyone who might need them, and this week several groups are giving them out on College Walk and in John Jay. If these options fail, there are condom machines in many of the residence halls around campus, or there are often condoms for sale in the vending machines. There is no excuse for not having a condom on hand or not going to get one.

Aside from abstinence, condoms are the most effective method to prevent STDs, including AIDS. Sexually active women who are involved in heterosexual relationships should also consider going to Health Services and investigating other methods of birth control. Women can be fitted for a diaphragm or receive a prescription to go on the Pill for a minimal fee. STDs and unwanted pregnancies are much less romantic than the slight delay which may occur while you look for a condom.