If women use the microbicide nonoxynol-9 during vaginal sex with men, does it protect them from HIV?

Nonoxynol-9 does not protect women from HIV infection, and also causes genital lesions.

Inclusion criteria

Studies:
Randomized controlled trials.

Participants:
Women in any setting or country.

Intervention:
Nonoxynol-9 (N-9) containing vaginal microbicides.

Outcomes:
New infections with HIV; genital lesions.

Results

- Five trials were included in the review, and four contributed to a meta-analysis; two trials were adequately concealed.
- Combined data from four trials (n=3454) shows the risk of HIV infection was not reduced among women using N-9 (relative risk 1.12, 95% confidence interval 0.88 to 1.42).
- Data from three trials (n=1795) showed the risk of genital lesions was statistically significantly greater among women using N-9 (relative risk 1.18, 95% confidence interval 1.02 to 1.36).


Produced by the Effective Health Care Alliance Programme (http://www.liv.ac.uk/evidence), Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, supported by the Department for International Development UK.
**Authors’ conclusions**

**Implications for practice:**
Nonoxynol-9 does not reduce the risk of women acquiring HIV infection from men, and its use is associated with a higher risk of genital lesions in women.

**Implications for research:**
Given the risk of harm to women, no further trials of N-9 as prophylaxis against HIV are warranted.