



Prevention: Spinning Beyond Latex and Gels

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Searching beyond the realm of latex and gels, scientists at the University of Washington in Seattle have developed an electrically spun cloth that can create both a chemical and a physical barrier against sperm and HIV in a laboratory setting. Publishing their findings in the journal PLOS ONE, the researchers used a technique known as electrospinning to create a stretchy mesh fabric that they then infused with antiretrovirals. The mesh can be manufactured to dissolve in minutes or over a few days and can be inserted into the vagina, either on its own or as a coating on a vaginal ring or other devices. This new technique potentially offers women a new, discrete way to protect themselves against pregnancy and infection with HIV as well as other sexually transmitted infections, both viral and bacterial. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has given the research team a nearly \$1 million grant to support further research.

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