

# Show & Gel

A pipeline report on girl-power tools for safe sex

January 1, 2004 By Rebecca Minnich

---

When will women finally receive their own reliable HIV preventive? Vaginal microbicides have been an “exciting and new” idea since the late ’80s—more than 11 such foams and gels are currently being studied in human trials. But there’s no guarantee that any microbicides will reach gals before 2010.

The problem, said Anna Forbes of the Global Campaign for Microbicides, is circular. “Pharmaceutical companies don’t want to invest until a product is in later stages of testing and has shown some real market potential.” And the product, of course, can’t show that potential without strong initial funding.

Meanwhile, beware of bogus microbicides like Pure Irish Moss, Erogel (nonoxynol-15, which may increase HIV risk) and Freedom Lube—being marketed without that pesky testing process. Just remember: No microbicide being sold today has been proven effective against HIV. Here’s a taste of what’s in the works.

---

## Microbicides & Devices

**Contender:** Carraguard. Made from carrageenan, a seaweed extract

**Game Plan:** To block HIV—plus HPV and gonorrhea—when applied vaginally (as a nontoxic gel) before sex

**Record:** Cleared safety tests—now in Phase III for effectiveness

**Reputation:** The Population Council’s top microbicide candidate

**Contender:** Topical Tenofovir. A nuke (NRTI) in gel form

**Game Plan:** To stop HIV from replicating at infection site. Inserted before sex

**Record:** Still in Phase I safety trials

**Reputation:** Repeated anti-retroviral smearing could be expensive

**Contender:** Lactobacillus Suppository. Concentrated naturally occurring vagi bacteria

**Game Plan:** To improve vaginal health and provide resistance to STDs, including HIV

**Record:** In Phase II clinical safety trials

**Reputation:** Women may find its natural origins especially appealing

**Contender:** Vaginal Ring. A hollow circle, similar to a diaphragm’s latex-coated ring

**Game Plan:** To release regular doses of HIV-killing compounds. Worn near the cervix

**Record:** Phase I testing has yet to begin

**Reputation:** Could be worn continuously for as long as a year

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Show-Gel-187-8322>