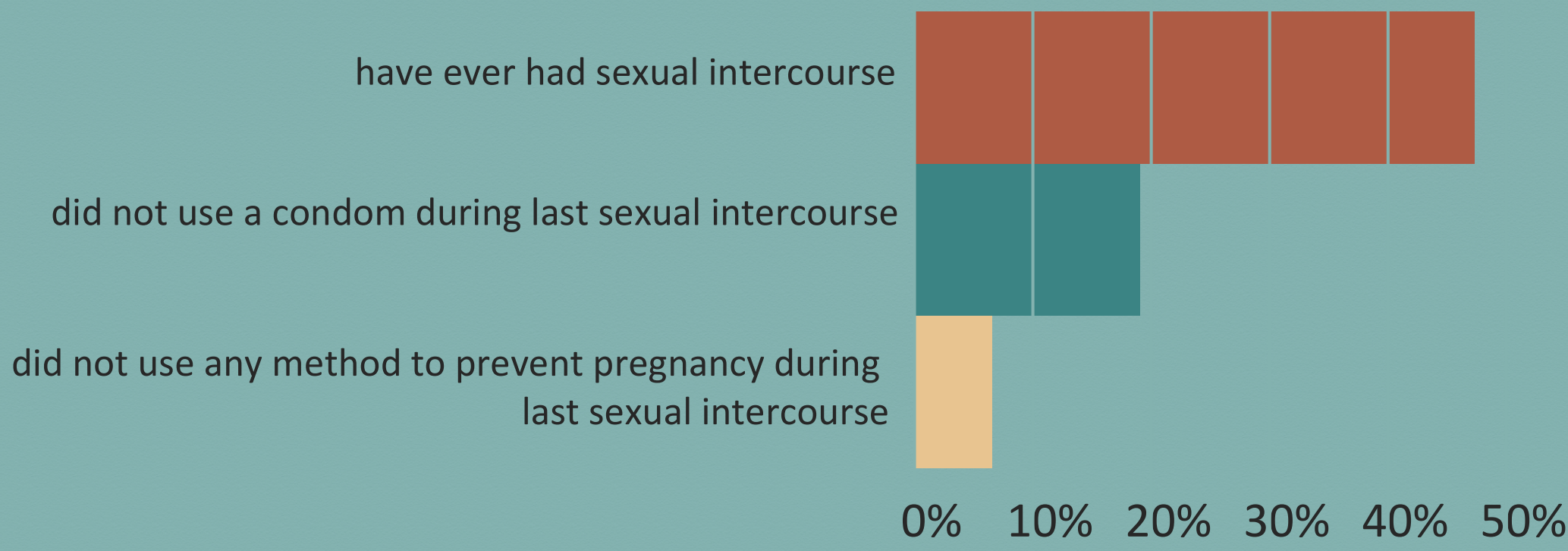


Sex Ed: what's missing?

Sexual Activity in Youth age 15-17 in the US



Although youth are having sex, almost half of those who are sexually active are not using condoms when having sex. And less than half of those not wearing condoms are using any method to prevent pregnancy, such as hormonal birth control or other barriers.

Despite the growing awareness for comprehensive sex education in US public high schools, the programs now implemented are leaving students unprepared for their sexual futures.

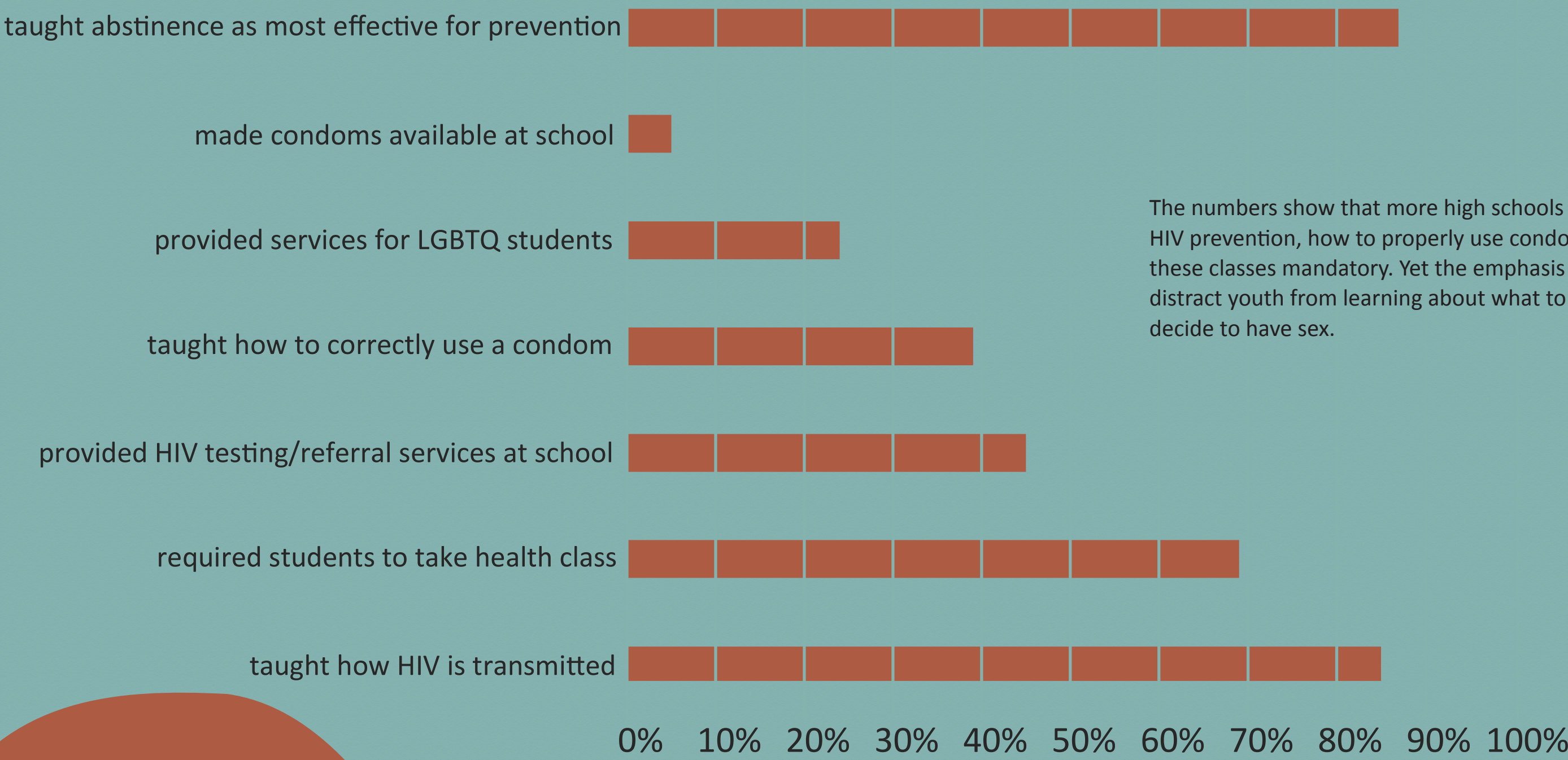
In the above graph, we can see that almost half of US youth age 15-17 are having sexual intercourse. This differs from other sexual activity since pregnancy, as well as contraction of sexually transpitted infections (STIs) can be a result. Although youth are having sex, almost half of those who are sexually active are not using condoms when having sex. Less than half of those not wearing condoms are using any method to prevent pregnancy, such as hormonal birth control or other barriers.

It may make sense that an increase in sexual education would result in safer sex practices, but what we often do not look into enough is what these youth are being taught. In the below graph, we can see that most US high schools teach absitence as the best way to prevent pregnancy and STI contraction. Although not having sex would result in never getting pregnant, teaching youth about abstinence can sometimes distract them from learning about what to do when they do decide to have sex. If we look further we can see that most high schools do not provide condoms to students, making it harder and more awkward for them to have access to these important barriers. Although higher numbers show that more high schools are teaching about HIV prevention, how to properly use condoms, and make these classes mandatory, there still seems to be a lack of knowledge for youth to have safer sex.

Teens have the highest rates of STIs of any age group.

1 in 3 young women will become pregnant before age 20

Sexual Education in Youth age 15-17 in the US

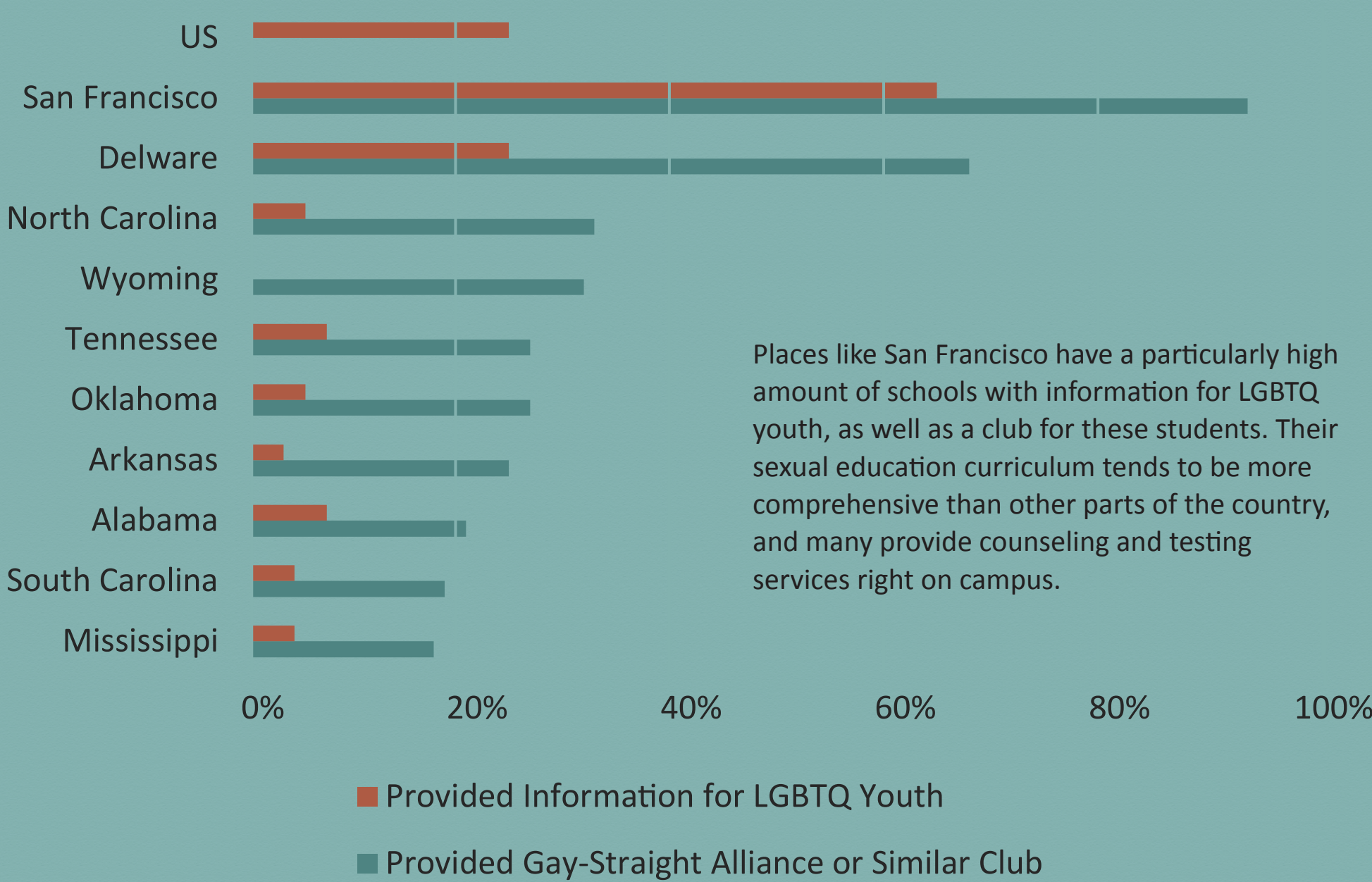


The numbers show that more high schools are teaching about HIV prevention, how to properly use condoms, and also make these classes mandatory. Yet the emphasis on abstinence can distract youth from learning about what to do when they do decide to have sex.

LGBTQ youth are more than twice as likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers

A new layer to the sex ed program in the US is the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Their risk factors have proven the need to include these folks in the dialogue of safer sex. If we look at the chart to the right, we can see that overall, the US has not consistently included information about these youth in sex ed programs. If we look at a place like San Francisco, we can see the overwhelming presence of information for LGBTQ youth as well as a Gay-Straight Alliance or similar club. Sadly, other areas of the country do not provide nearly as much information. One may wonder if the lack of knowledge being presented to youth about LGBTQ health may be contributing to the discrimination of these folks and therefore their high suicide rate.

LGBTQ Youth Services by Region



Places like San Francisco have a particularly high amount of schools with information for LGBTQ youth, as well as a club for these students. Their sexual education curriculum tends to be more comprehensive than other parts of the country, and many provide counseling and testing services right on campus.

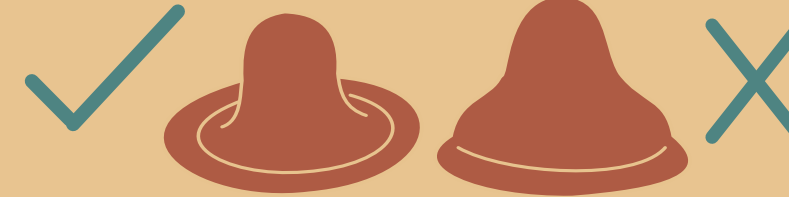
Prevention Heroes!

One issue with curent sex ed programs is the lack of diversity of safer sex practices. Below are some less common, but equally as important, safer sex materials.



A classic, this frequently seen barrier is great for penises and penetrative toys such as dildos. They are used all over the world to prevent HIV/AIDS and other STI's. Non-latex versions are available, as well as diferent sizes.

1. Check expiration date and air bubble that should indicate no holes have been made
2. Place the resevoir tip on the top of the item, so the condom resembles a sombrero, rather than a beanie



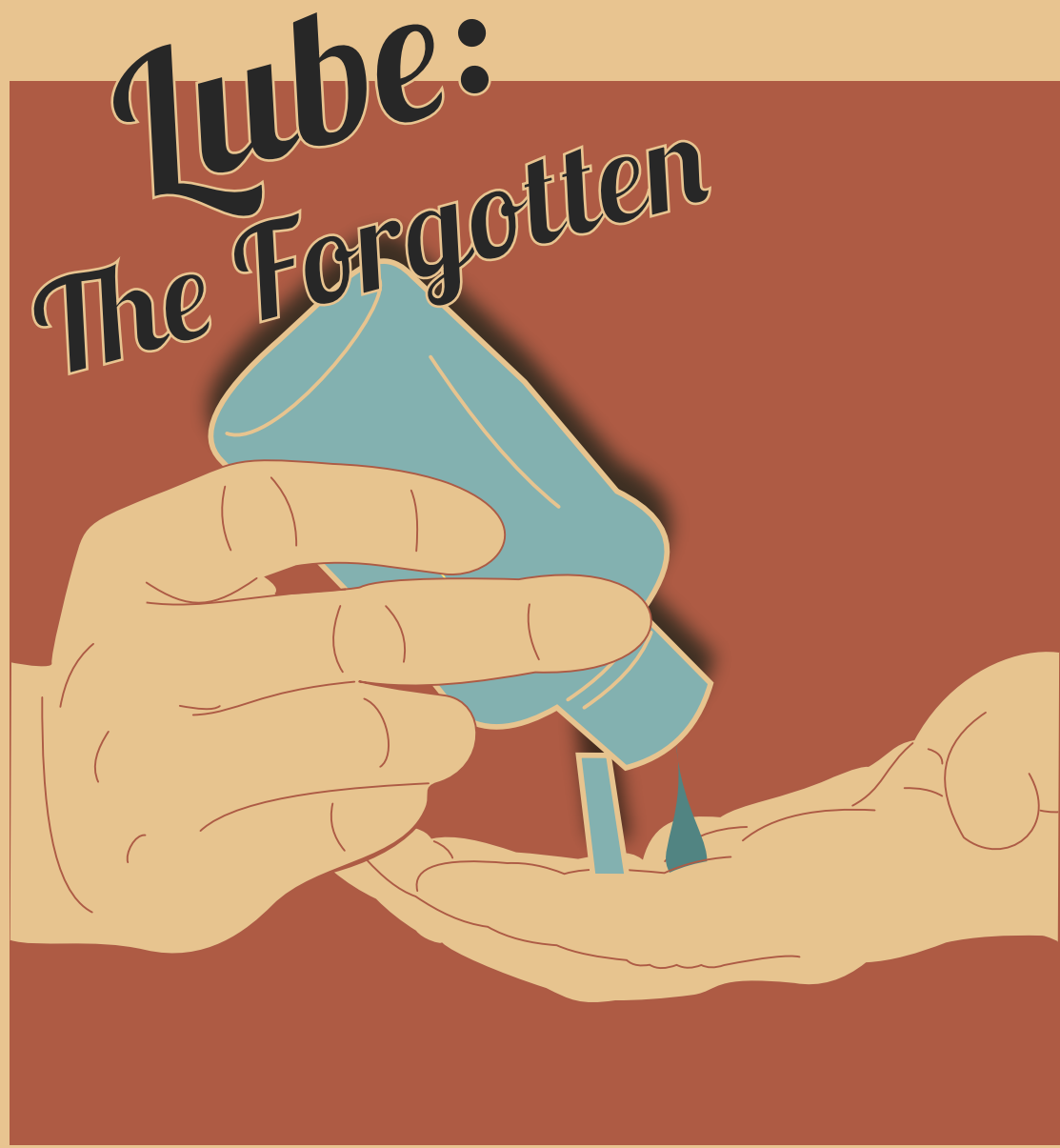
3. Holding the top, roll the rest of the condom all the way down to the base of the penis or toy.

Lube can be added after the condom is on. A single drop inside the condom before putting it on can also help reduce friction. Be sure not to use too much inside or it may slip off.



Most know dental dams from a dentist's office, but these thin sheets of latex are also great for safer sex. Dental dams have decreased in popularity, even in high-use groups such as queer couples, and their presence in sex-ed classes is decreasing, too. Stigmas are associated with using barriers during oral sex, but transmission of STIs is still possible, so it is always recommended! These are great for non-penetrative sex, such as oral sex on the vulva or anus. Use lube and buy flavored ones for a yumier experience, but beware! The flavored side should be away from the body. The extra special thing about dental dams? They cover plenty of surface area on the body, keeping things extra safe!

1. Check expiriation date
2. Apply lube to one side, and place that side against the body
3. The other side, or flavored side, is now ready for safe oral sex!



Lube is a often-stigmatized product, rarely seen as a safer sex material. What folks often do not realize, is that lube is what keeps safer sex barriers from breaking. By reducing friction, lube can help ensure a condom doesnt rip, and that latex and other materials feel comfortable against any part of the body. There are a variety of lubricants, but some have specific purposes.

- Water based:** is great for all types of sex. For those with extra sensitive bodies, look for water based lube without glycerin, which is basically a form of sugar, as it may cause yeast infections. If it starts to get sticky, spit or add water to get it "slippery" again.
- Flavored:** should only be used for oral sex. The amount of sugar in flavored lube can result in irritation or yeast infection if used internally.
- Silicone:** great for anal sex and sex in water as it stays "slippery" longer and won't wash away with water. Use carefully at first, as it sometimes takes longer to rise from the body and may cause irritation. Never use with silicone toys as it will break down the material.
- Warming/Cooling:** can be great for added sensation, but folks tend to be sensitive to this too. Test it out by applying to the forearm before trying it during sex.
- Spermicidal:** is often recommended in health classes but has found to be very harmful to lots of folks. Most contain nonoxyl-9, which kills sperm, but can lead to the deterioration of the vaginal and uterine walls. Stick to a barrier to fend off sperm.



Gloves are handy for their multiple uses. Their main, and perhaps most obvious use is for digital, or manual stimulation, which basically means sex with the hands. Fingers or fists in the vulva or anus, or even urethra and mouth are also at risk for spreading STIs. A cut on the hand or dirt under the fingernails can affect health more than most realize.

Gloves can also be made into dental dams, as seen below.



Be sure to keep gloves clean and out of sunlight. Nonlatex versions are available, as well as many sizes for increased comfort.



The internal condom (also called female condom, FC², or reality condom) is a great alternative to the classic condom. Larger than a classic condom, this barrier contains two rings. The ring inside of the condom, which can be removed, goes inside the body, and the outer condom, which lines the opening to the condom, stays outside. The external ring keeps the condom gently in place while covering plenty of the body allowing penetration without tightness around the toy or penis. The internal ring is used for insertion and is also a stabilizer, keeping the condom against the cervix or inside the anus. The internal condom can be used in the vagina or anus, but most prefer to remove the internal ring before anal use. Lube can be used on the inside and/or outside of this material. It can also be inserted up to 4 hours before sex. This material is good for folks who want to prepare themselves for safe sex instead of putting a barrier on/in their partner, for avoiding having to wait for a penis to get erect, and for those who like to have spontaneous safe sex.

1. Check expiration date
2. Pinch inner ring (or end of condom if ring is removed) and insert into the body
3. Be sure the external ring is still outside of the body, especially with anal sex
4. After use, twist from external ring to keep fluids from spilling and remove