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More Than 200 Organizations Call on CVS to Stop Practice of Locking Condoms, Adopt National Policy

CVS at least three times more likely to lock condoms in communities of color in many markets, according to Cure CVS

Washington, D.C. – A national coalition of more than [200 community organizations](#), health care educators and advocates announced today they are uniting in an effort to stop CVS Caremark Corp. from locking condoms in its drugstores nationwide. Together, the Cure CVS: Unlock the Condoms Initiative is asking CVS to adopt a corporate policy to keep all condoms unlocked at all times. CVS's closest competitor Walgreen's has a policy against locking up condoms in any of its stores.

Members of the Cure CVS: Unlock the Condoms Initiative rallied outside a CVS store on Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. and held a mid-day press conference where they unveiled a joint letter to CVS Caremark Corp. CEO Tom Ryan, that states "We urge CVS to put the health of our communities first and adopt a written policy that ensures all condoms are permanently unlocked in all communities across the country, regardless of race."

"The practice of locking up condoms makes it infinitely more difficult for young people to access the full array of contraceptive and safer sex products they need," said Sarah Audelo from Advocates for Youth, a national organization that champions efforts to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. "Far too many people will simply turn around and walk out of a CVS empty handed rather than ask someone to unlock the case and endure the scrutiny of others while they make their selection. It's a real problem that can be easily overcome if CVS simply adopts a new national policy."

CVS Locks Condoms in Communities Hardest Hit by HIV/AIDS

Surveys of more than 2,200 CVS stores found that CVS locks up condoms in 19 of 21 markets surveyed. In 13 markets, CVS has a pattern of locking condoms disproportionately in communities of color, according to Cure CVS. In 9 of those markets, CVS is at least three times more likely to lock condoms in communities of color than in zip codes that are majority white.

HIV/AIDS is the number one killer of black American women between the ages of 25 and 34, and that the rate of new HIV infections among Latinos is three times the rate of whites.

"Increase in HIV infections is the result of lack of access to HIV/AIDS care and prevention methods, and CVS's practice of locking condom cases in predominantly Latino neighborhoods contributes to this problem in our communities. Everyone in the United States should be working to break down barriers that impede individuals from preventing HIV transmission. Condoms should be more readily available to everyone and CVS would do well to be a leader in this effort," said Juan David Gastolomendo, Program Director at Latino Commission on AIDS.

Cities Surveyed for Presence of Locked Condoms in CVS Stores

The cities where Cure CVS surveyors found locked condoms are: Metro Atlanta; Metro Baltimore; Greater Boston; Metro Chicago; Metro Dallas; Greater Detroit; Greater Houston; Metro Indianapolis; Las Vegas area; Los Angeles County; Newark, New Jersey area; New York City; South Florida, Metro Orlando, Florida; Greater Philadelphia; Greater Phoenix; Greater Pittsburgh; Greater Providence; and Greater San Diego, California.

Fairfield County, CT and Washington DC are the only markets where surveyors did not observe condom lockup.

Why CVS?

CVS is the nation's largest drugstore chain with more than 6,900 stores. CVS Caremark Corporation fills or manages more than 1 billion prescriptions a year and claims 150 million people as its customers – that is one in two Americans. CVS is the industry leader and is in a position to set the standards for the industry as a whole. CVS's closest competitor Walgreen's has a policy against locking up condoms in any of its stores.

"We place great trust in the hands of pharmacies and stores like CVS when we shop for health care products and services. We are not going to be fooled by CVS as they continue to lock-up or make inaccessible a product that is designed to protect against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV/AIDS. We must call out their unequal treatment of different communities for what it is – a discriminatory practice. NOW has been fighting for improved reproductive health care for more than 43 years and we will not be deterred from our goal of ensuring full access to condoms across the country," said Melody Drnach, Vice President Action, National Organization for Women (NOW).

Have a Heart, Unlock the Condoms

Today's announcement of a national coalition comes just four months after public health advocates and CVS shoppers began challenging CVS Caremark Corp. over its practice of keeping [condoms in locked cases](#). Last February, advocates rallied outside CVS drugstores in several major U.S. cities and CVS shoppers sent hundreds of Valentine's Day cards to CVS Caremark Corp. CEO Tom Ryan, urging him to "have a heart, unlock the condoms."

For a complete list of organizations participating in the national coalition visit www.CureCVSNow.org

Cure CVS is an initiative by Change to Win and partner organizations to reform the drugstore industry, starting with CVS, the country's leading provider of prescription drugs and largest drugstore chain. By joining concerned citizen groups with the six million members of Change to Win unions, Cure CVS aims to ensure that CVS provides equal access across all communities and income levels to its stores and services, offers fair and accurate prices, provides quality products and services, protects customers' privacy and puts quality pharmacy care first.

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