Bespoke condoms hit the market. With all that can be custom-made these days, why not them? Hoping to tackle the rampant fit and feel complaints of many men, Global Protection Corp. is marketing myONE Perfect Fit as an alternative to standard size condoms.

But, will they actually reverse the declining trend in consistent use or disrupt the space as others have tried and failed to do? Boasting “10 LENGTHS. 9 WIDTHS. 60 SIZES,” myONE doubles down on men’s needs writing on their website: “Standard condoms can sometimes feel too tight, too loose, too short, too long. Sound familiar? That's because most condoms were the same size. Until now.”

Discussions around the penis, in particular its length and girth, have dominated the cultural landscape. I would argue throughout all time, but acknowledge I can’t necessarily support this statement with evidence. Maybe that’s why I am starting to develop a niche or what journalists call a beat in my articles. (See Stuff Not To Do With Your Penis, Penis & Urethra: Inanimate Objects in Orifices).

Time and again, these stories pop up in the media and somehow my colleagues at ACSH give me the gentle nudge to dive deeper. I choose to assume it is due to my extensive medical knowledge and unwavering professionalism since one male co-worker suggested I name this piece “Dear Men, It’s Smaller Than You Think” or “Why You Shouldn't Super-Size Your Condom.”

Though I routinely support humor as a vital adjunct in the medical sphere, his titles reflect an underlying reality. Men and their penis size - real or imagined - is a crucial part of the conversation when addressing proper condom use for pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infection prevention. That said, it is possible to have a frank discussion on the topic while interspersing levity and
empathy.

Given only a third of men -- aged 15-44 -- reported using a condom at last sexual intercourse, innovation in this arena might very well benefit public health since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) demonstrate record highs in commonly reported sexually transmitted diseases. This company is not alone in trying to move the needle. In fact, a litany of efforts to revolutionize condoms are well-documented in a NY Times article which include attempts by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support projects whose design made them more pleasurable.

Due to its being considered a medical device, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has imposed certain challenges for companies (e.g. costs for testing) and until recently the standard size had to be at least 6.69 inches long which studies show is about an inch longer than the average length of a man’s penis. The advocacy for smaller sizes centers around a bunch of considerations like not having excess rolled latex which some men report to be uncomfortable as well as increasing confidence when wearing one that isn’t too big.

With conventional wisdom being: if they can feel more like the real thing, then people will be more inclined to use them. And more likely to achieve the goal of each and every time.

To grasp the magnitude of the task and speculate on this product’s chances of successfully penetrating the industry, let’s plunge into some of the issues. But, first, a bit more insight into why size matters.

One study sampling 1,661 sexually active men in the United States via anonymous self-reporting asserts the average penile length is 5.57 inches and average penile circumference 4.81 inches. Another performed a systematic review of 20 studies totaling 15,521 men to construct nomograms for flaccid and erect penis length and circumference (to view them, see here). The latter study found the mean erect length to be 0.4 inches shorter and the mean erect circumference 0.24 inches less than the former one. They recognize there can be a bias to self-reporting, but acknowledge that a standardized way to measure penis dimensions can be influenced by temperature, level of arousal and previous ejaculation.

This condom-maker attempts to eliminate the size status by coding length and girth with random letters and numbers. This way, discerning if G22 is somehow larger than E66 will be difficult to determine in the locker room or elsewhere.

Condoms are incredibly effective as a means of birth control and disease prevention. But, they need to be used correctly. There is great variety in penile dimensions. Research has shown an association between condom failure rates and such dimensions (falling in the range of less than 1% to roughly 5%). So, selecting an appropriate size is one step in the process.

In Vagina: Inanimate Objects in Orifices, I address condom slippage. In this instance, one challenge is retrieving the retained foreign body. However, where this issue comes to a head is the realization that everything the condom was supposed to do it isn’t doing anymore. With the sperm leaking out and oozing everywhere, pregnancy and infection prevention go awry. Honesty and introspection might play a role here, along with improved education materials and discussion with medical providers. It is essential to consider if the size condom is appropriate for one’s member.
along with properly removing it upon withdrawal. Also, is it being correctly put on the penis? Happenstance is possible too.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [5], “almost 7% of women aged 15-44 who used a condom in the past 4 weeks said the condom broke or completely fell off during intercourse or withdrawal,” Another work [10] compared the breakage, slippage and acceptability of a fitted condom to that of a standard one. Fortunately, it found rates of condom failure for both to be low. (1) Breakage for fitted condoms was significantly less, in particular among men in the middle circumference category during anal intercourse, larger circumference category for vaginal intercourse and longer length category for both. More slippage upon vaginal withdrawal was found in the fitted condom which was attributed to a need to provide improved education materials.

But, one question remains. If this fitted condom proves to be a real win, will men still buy Magnum? Time will tell. Human nature is a tricky thing.

Note(s):

(1) The fitted condom used here was TheyFit which originally got FDA clearance in 2001.