



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 18, 2011

Philadelphia Offering Condoms to 11-Year-Olds

The city of Philadelphia has an important message for its 11-year-old residents: sex can be loads of fun, but it's better "when you're not worried about getting pregnant or getting an STD."

That's right! Through its health department, the "City of Brotherly Love" is reaching out to kids ages 11 to 19 through a new website, takecontrolphilly.org, that appears to exist for one reason: to convince the city's youth to wear condoms, and to offer to mail them to kids for free.

The cartoon-themed website's home page screams out in huge script: "Having sex? Protect yourself from Chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, syphilis," and offers a link with the invitation: "Get Free Condoms!" (See illustration, left.)

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Of course, the assumption is that Philly's teens — and pre-teens — are going to be sexually active, so the city's compassionate, tax-paid health and social workers might as well help them to practice "safe sex." Apparently, there is good reason for concern. According to a study by the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the city has the largest rate of sexually-active teens in the nation and the fifth-largest HIV/AIDS rate in the 11 to 19 age group.

Among the website's pages are a fact sheet about sexually-transmitted diseases, a pitch to kids on why they should use condoms, and even a page devoted to the difference between male and female condoms — and how to use both. To help kids navigate through the confusing array of information and advice is a friendly cartoon character named Zelda, a 20-something woman drawn to be vaguely African-American or Hispanic, who "knows how important it is to make smart choices and take control of your own life."

The city's health department is using the CDC study as its marching orders, noting that according to statistics, 26 percent of the city's high school-aged youth have had sexual intercourse with four or more persons, and more than a third said they did not use condoms.

It sounds as if the community might have a crisis on its hands. "We hear from teachers and school counselors and sometimes the principals that kids are cutting school in the afternoon and leaving early to go have orgies — and that's in middle school," the heads of one community youth group told ABC News. "They get groups together with kids of different genders — sometimes same-sex and sometimes mixed. The parents are not home and so they go there and have sex and trade partners."

But Focus on the Family's Chad Hills, an expert on abstinence education, told the [Christian Post](#) that promoting condom use to kids amounts to an open invitation for sexual activity and is an irresponsible approach to a difficult problem. "Most 11-year-old kids must be told to brush their teeth before bed, to





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take a shower at least several times a week, to put on clean clothes, and comb their hair before walking out the door,” Hills said. “Now we’re handing them condoms and instantly transporting them into the world of adult sexual activity — awakening their curiosity and sexual passions before they can even think for themselves?”

Hills and other experts point out that a major solution to the problem that Philadelphia — and hundreds of other communities — find themselves dealing with is to consistently teach and encourage young people to hold off on sex until marriage. In fact, reported the *Christian Post*, a 2010 study by the University of Pennsylvania found that “abstinence education was the most effective in reducing sexual activity among youths after studying 662 students from four public middle schools that serve low-income African American communities.” The study found that “middle school students in Philadelphia who attended abstinence-only classes were less likely to become sexually active than their peers who went to classes emphasizing only condom use or even classes that taught both condom use and abstinence.”

A follow-up study found that while a third of the students who completed the abstinence-only program had sex within two years after the class, more than half of those in the program that encouraged condom use went on to be sexually active.

Leslie Unruh of the [National Abstinence Clearinghouse](#) told the *Christian Post* that the only safe bet for protecting kids — both physically and emotionally — is teaching them total abstinence:

Latex, powders, pills, and potions will never be the answer to this crisis. Condoms don’t protect the heart and aren’t 100 percent protection against many sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. The only 100 percent effective way to protect one’s body and heart is abstinence until marriage.



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