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**PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release**

**Valentine’s Day kicks off National Condom Week**

SOUTH CENTRAL IDAHO- Americans spend almost \$20 billion each year on candy, cards, flowers and other gifts for Valentine’s Day. South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) encourages residents to add another item to their holiday shopping list: condoms.

When used correctly, condoms are an excellent tool to help prevent unintended pregnancy, prevent the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS, and help reduce the risk of infection from other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), like gonorrhea and chlamydia.

“If left untreated, some STDs can cause serious long-term problems, like infertility,” said Tanis Maxwell, SCPHD Epidemiologist. “If you don’t use condoms you put yourself at risk of catching those diseases.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate there are approximately 20 million new STD infections each year—almost half of them among young people ages 15 to 24. In south central Idaho, more than 800 people were diagnosed with STDs in 2021.

SCPHD offers free condoms in five offices across the region, along with information about how to use them.

While condoms provide an excellent barrier against STD’s, they do not provide absolute protection. It’s important to get tested before and after sexual contact with any new partners. Some infected people may be unaware of their infection because STDs often are asymptomatic and unrecognized.

Learn more about condoms and other safer sex methods here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/default.htm>