Imagine walking into school one day and being handed a condom in homeroom. What would be your immediate reaction? I don’t know about you, but I’d be shocked. Since when did East High become the neighborhood pharmacy?

There’s a fine line between our school and private lives. Although it may seem like everyone is having sex, that’s not true. Only 35 percent of teens in high school are currently sexually active, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A small portion of our classmates are actually doing it, so why should condoms be distributed to everyone, especially in schools, which are supposed to be public educational institutions?

Hand Out Better Sex Ed, Not Condoms

Don’t get me wrong. I’m all for sexuality education. Teens who receive comprehensive sex education are more aware of important sexual health topics, like birth control and sexually transmitted diseases, and are more likely to delay sex. Teens who receive comprehensive sex ed also learn that while condoms greatly reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease (STD), there’s always still a slight risk of pregnancy and STDs involved in sex. They also learn that by abstaining from vaginal, anal or oral sex, they can completely protect themselves from STDs or pregnancy, or both.

Condoms can even be available in the nurse’s office for teens who need them, but they shouldn’t be handed out to all students. Instead of distributing condoms, schools should invest in good sex education. This way, students are taught the benefits of abstinence while receiving valuable knowledge about their bodies, sexual behaviors, birth control and healthy relationships.

Private vs. Public

The key purpose of school is to serve as a place for learning. It is wrong to bring our private lives into this public, educational institution by distributing condoms. Schools are not pharmacies or drug stores; condoms should not be handed out here. Many teens also have smoking and drinking problems, but that does not mean schools should offer filtered cigarettes or have an Alcoholics Anonymous support group? There are certain activities, like drinking and smoking, which are legally appropriate for adults. Sex should, at the very least, also be recognized as an activity meant for mature adults.

My mom, Alicia, strongly believes that the main purpose of school is education. She argues, “Schools should focus on teaching its students. I think sex education is great, but it’s going overboard when schools start handing out condoms. They have no right to do that—not unless they’re willing to take on the responsibility of teaching the ethics, morality and values of sex as well.”

School and sex should always be kept separate, and distributing condoms would be crossing the line into our personal lives. I’m not quite ready to pick up my textbooks, pencils, calculator and—oh, wait—that condom I was given in homeroom. Can you imagine all the nasty pranks and banana jokes you’d hear?!

On the Forums at Sexetc.org

I do think condoms should be distributed in school. They need to quit taking the “abstinence-only” route, and need to start thinking safety first. Teenagers will do it with or without a condom. Might as well prevent stuff from happening.

— Melissa, 15, Hollister, MO

Condoms should definitely be available. The availability of condoms will not encourage or deter kids from having sex. The only thing it will change is if they are protected or not, and isn’t it better for them to be safe? You can’t honestly think that they won’t have sex if they don’t have free condoms.

— Amanda, 18, NJ
Imagine exiting your sex ed class and your teacher handing you a condom at the door. Awkward? Definitely. But not only did you just save yourself a chunk of change, now you also have a condom, in case you ever need it! Though most teens aren’t having sex, some are. And whether you’re having sex or not, you’re likely to need condoms in the future.

**Condoms Shouldn’t Be Embarrassing**

Unfortunately, most of us feel shy about buying condoms in a pharmacy. When I first started high school, I walked into my local pharmacy to buy gum, and saw someone familiar out of the corner of my eye. He was over in a section I wasn’t familiar with, but when I looked closer, I saw a box of condoms in his hand. We both instantly turned red and bashfully looked the other way. The act of buying condoms can be embarrassing, especially if you run into someone you know. Suddenly, a mere acquaintance knows you’re having sex. He or she may wonder with whom. Even worse, the acquaintance may gossip about you, telling strangers about your intimate life. Ugh!

But think about it: getting condoms shouldn’t be so embarrassing, especially if using condoms is a great way to reduce your risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The only 100-percent effective way of preventing pregnancy and STDs is abstinence. But if you choose to have sex, you need another option. Using a condom in conjunction with a hormonal birth control, like the Pill, the patch, NuvaRing or the shot, is your safest choice. The bottom line is, if condoms are super accessible, teens are more likely to use them.

Distributing condoms means students can take a condom and get a feel for how it works and how to use it. And if condoms are handed out and part of sex ed class, there’s less stigma for those few students who really need them to reduce their risk of pregnancy or getting an STD.

**School, Condoms and Sex Ed**

Even if you or your friends aren’t having sex, it’s good to be informed. Giving out condoms in school makes school a safe, comfortable environment for talking about sexuality and its consequences. If a school has a learning environment where sex is frankly discussed, teens are more likely to open up about their concerns or problems. And when they go home that afternoon and their mom or dad asks, “So what did you do in school today?” that condom may prompt teens to ask questions and talk frankly to their parents about sex too: When’s the right time to have sex? What are the risks involved?

Opponents of distributing condoms in school argue that handing out condoms will make it more likely that kids will have sex, normalizing teen sexuality and even giving them the tools to have it. But acknowledging teen sexuality, emphasizing the risks and responsibilities, and making it super easy for kids to be responsible, is part of a school’s job.

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**Schools should not give out condoms. I believe it encourages sex without love. But information about condoms along with abstinence should definitely be taught as a major way to prevent teenage pregnancy.**

- Aidan, 17, NJ

**Condoms should definitely be distributed in schools. They distribute them in colleges because if people are going to have sex, they should have safe sex. They’re not promoting sex like some people might think, but rather safe sex and lowering the risk of STDs and pregnancies.**

- Shellie, 15, Spokane, WA