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## New York wraps up five years of handing out free condoms

NEW YORK: New York City this week marked the fifth anniversary of a groundbreaking free condom program that has distributed tens of millions free rubbers, under the racy slogan "NYC Condoms -- Get Some!"

NYC brand Condoms, launched on Valentine's Day 2007 by the city's health department, were the first to be produced by a municipality.

The program started out by handing out condoms throughout the city's subway, in what was hailed as a bold initiative to try to conquer sexually-transmitted illnesses.

Officials say the widely-imitated program has been a great success at helping reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted disease and AIDS and HIV.

"Since 2007 launch, the NYC Condom has helped pave the way for other cities to brand their own condoms, cities like Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Vancouver to name just a few," said Monica Sweeney, Assistant Commissioner of the New York City Health Department.

Sweeney said that while NYC brand condoms have only been in existence a

half-decade, the city has been giving out the prophylactics for much longer.

"I'm very proud to say that the Health Department has been distributing free male condoms since 1971," she said.

For half a decade, New York has doled out packages of premium, lubricated latex condoms at some 3,500 distribution points, from hospitals to bars, designated stores,

businesses, community organizations bars, night clubs and health clinics.

The eye-catching design on each condom package riffs on the city's iconic subway sys-

tem, using an instantly-recognizable design borrowed from the city's iconic subway map.

And the free rubbers program has continued to break ground, with a smartphone app that helps New Yorkers determine the closest place to get theirs.

The anniversary of the program fell this week on February 14, Valentine's Day, a holiday which has been re-purposed by some Americans as "National Condom Day."

The initiative distributes not only conventional rubbers, but female condoms, as well as water-based personal lubricants. - AFP



NYC Condom brands seen during a program to announce "NYC Condom: A Retrospective Exhibit" at New York University and National Condom Awareness Week February 15, 2013 in New York. Since 1971 the New York City Health Department has been providing free male condoms and introduced the country's first branded condom, the 'NYC Condom', on National Condom Awareness Day 2007. - AFP PHOTO