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GOING GREEN Sex and the Eco-City.

Look out, petroleum jelly. Getting it on is getting greener

BY KATHLEEN KINGSBURY

IN MANY WAYS, CHOOSING A sex toy is not unlike buying a car. Walk into most adult shops, and the new-car smell is undeniable. Salespeople tout motor speed and durability. And then there are emissions to consider.

That's carbon emissions, of course. As the green movement makes its way into the bedroom, low lighting is a must—to conserve electricity—but so are vegan condoms, organic lubricants and hand-cranked vibrators.

Another big enviro-sex trend: birth control that's au naturel. Like all good Catholics, my husband and I had to attend church-run marriage prep before we tied the knot last year. I was surprised, however, during the hard sell on natural family-planning (NFP), that this updated version of the rhythm method was being

Photographs for TIME by Mauricio Alejo

ILLUSTRATION FOR TIME BY HARRY CAMPBELL

advertised not only as morally correct but also as “organic” and “green.” I was even more surprised when I found out that some of the most popular instructors of NFP—known in secular circles as the Fertility Awareness Method—are non-Catholics who praise it as a means of avoiding both ingesting chemicals and excreting them into rivers and streams.

Nikki Walker, 35, an actress in New York City, stopped taking the Pill because of concerns about the effects of excess estrogen on her body and the environment. “I do yoga every day and eat vegetarian,” she says. “Why wouldn’t I go green in this area of my life?”

Walker recently attended her first Tupperware-style pleasure party, thrown by Oregon-based Earth Erotics, where the goods for sale included organic massage oils and whips made of recycled inner tubes. At a time when Americans are just getting used to prime-time ads for Trojan and K-Y, eco-consumers are learning that most of the personal lubricants in the U.S.—drugstores sold \$82 million worth of them last year—contain chemicals found in oven cleaner and antifreeze.

“Our taboos prevent us from having the same consumer-safety conversations that are commonplace when you’re making a toothbrush, sneaker or baby bottle,” says Ethan Imboden, founder of Jimmyjane, a luxury adult-toy maker based in San Francisco. This bashfulness is not helped by the fact that the adult-novelty industry is largely unregulated. “Manufacturers can use whatever they want,” says Imboden. “And they do.”

Case in point: that new-car smell. It may connote nice and clean, but the odor comes from phthalates, which are used to soften plastics in many products, including some sex toys. Like bisphenol A, these compounds are endocrine inhibitors that some studies have linked to premature puberty in girls and low sperm production in boys. Europe and Cali-

Green Between the Sheets. A look at eco-friendly offerings



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- 1 Nonleather whips** are cruelty-free (to cows, that is). Earth Erotics' whips, top right, are made from recycled inner tubes. **2 Neoprene handcuffs** are also pro-cow. **3 Vegan condoms** remove dairy protein from latex. **4 Organic lubricant**, unlike many synthetics, lacks chemicals found in antifreeze

fornia have already banned certain phthalates.

The search for phthalate-free alternatives helps explain the increase in sales of sex toys made of such materials as stainless steel, mahogany—yes, you read that correctly—and glass. Babeland, a sex shop with locations in Seattle and New York City, saw sales of a stainless-steel toy triple from 2007 to 2008. Sales of glass models rose 85% in the same period. Says Babeland co-founder Claire Cavanah: “People want high-quality, renewable materials that they know will last.” (And in the case of Pyrex toys, that they know can be safely warmed in the microwave.)

Babeland sells four times as much of Good Clean Love's organic lubricant as it does of a national synthetic brand. “It just goes to show that if they have choices, customers pick more eco-friendly and natural options,” Cavanah says.

The Roman Catholic Church is catching on to the organic trend. “People pay \$32 for eye cream because they're told it is good for them and the planet,” says Jessica Marie Smith, who repackaged the NFP program at the diocese of Madison, Wis. “We figured we could do the same with NFP.”

NFP detects ovulation by monitoring a woman's temperature and the amount of cervical mucus. But this process is not 100% accurate. And several studies on climate change note that the best way to protect the planet is to have fewer children. “Around the world, more than 40% of pregnancies are unintended, and full access to birth control is still unmet,” says Jim Daniels, Trojan's vice president for marketing. “Meeting that unmet need would translate into billions of tons of carbon dioxide saved.”

To that end, Trojan makes latex condoms as well as ones made of biodegradable lambskin. Other brands offer a vegan variety that replaces the dairy protein in latex condoms with cocoa powder. And no, they don't all taste like chocolate. ■