**Cosmopolitan covered up in U.S. stores after advocates label it 'porn'**

**Some major U.S. chains are pledging to shield Cosmo from customers after group says it 'harms minors'**

By Sophia Harris, [CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/cbc-news-online-news-staff-list-1.1294364) Posted: Sep 16, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Sep 16, 2015 10:23 AM ET

A U.S. advocacy group says the magazine has 'pornographic' content and believes it should be shielded from minors.

With cleavage-bearing front cover models and sexually explicit content, [Cosmopolitan](http://www.cosmopolitan.com/) aims to get noticed. But some major U.S. retailers are covering up the women's magazine following pressure from an advocacy group that claims the publication is "pornographic."

American chains Rite Aid Pharmacy, Food Lion grocery, and Walmart in the U.S.are all pledging to shield Cosmo's racy headlines from shoppers. Walmart Canada, however, is keeping the magazine out in the open.

**Cosmo harms minors?**

With a reach of more than 100 million readers worldwide, Cosmo is often given prime display space at checkout counters. It's hard for shoppers to miss the magazine's titillating teaser headlines.

But now the publication is getting some unwanted attention from the recently launched, "[Cosmo Harms Minors](http://endsexualexploitation.org/cosmo/)" campaign. [In a news release](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/victoria-hearst-takes-on-hearst-corporations-cosmopolitan-magazine-300068753.html), campaigners contend that the magazine has morphed into a "verbally, and many times visually pornographic 'how-to' sex guide" that is now targeting young girls.

The crusade is spearheaded by Victoria Hearst, a born-again Christian and the granddaughter of newspaper icon William Randolph Hearst, who founded Cosmo's publishing company.

Hearst and her co-campaigners with the American National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) argue the magazine should be shielded from children and covered up in stores, just like Playboy.

"We are asking that Cosmo be sold to adults only and have the cover wrapped like all other porn magazines in retail shops," said NCOSE spokeswoman Haley Halverson.

It all seems a bit much to Toronto Walmart shopper, Joanne Motta, who has a teenaged daughter and says she's seen far worse on display. "There are ads in malls that are much racier and more offensive," she said.

**The Cosmo coverup**

But some U.S. retailers are taking notice. "We are working to place future issues of [Cosmo] behind pocket shields," Rite Aid spokeswoman Ashley Flower told CBC News in an email. The pharmacy operates about 4,600 locations across the U.S.



The magazine now sits in a holder that covers its sometimes racy headlines. This photo was taken by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. (NCOSE)

Food Lion, a grocery chain, says it has now placed Cosmo in holders that shield the text on the magazine's front cover at its more than 1,100 stores.

The retailer got Cosmo to provide the holders and made the move "to make sure we're being respectful of our shoppers concerns and preferences," said spokeswoman Christy Phillips-Brown in an email.

Halverson said U.S. Walmart is also playing ball. "Walmart told NCOSE that it has committed to enforce its existing, but previously unenforced policies to place Cosmo behind blinders."The blinders cover the magazine's front cover text.

Halverson added that Walmart's pledge "marks a significant change."

The retail giant told CBC News that, for more than a decade, it has provided magazine blinders to cover Cosmo at its U.S. stores. However, as a result of the campaign, it has "sent a refresher communication out on their use," said spokesman Kory Lundberg in an email.

**No coverup at Walmart Canada**

At Canadian Walmarts, however, the magazine continues to be boldly displayed**.** "Walmart Canada does not have a policy to cover Cosmo Magazine nor are they blocked now," said company spokesman Alex Robertson in an email.

When asked why the Canadian policy is different, Robertson responded, "Walmart Canada and Walmart U.S. are run as separate businesses focused on customer needs in each market."

NCOSE is encouraging Canadians to contact their local Walmarts to complain. "All children, no matter the country, deserve to be protected from being exposed to explicit material in the checkout line," said Halverson.

The latest edition of Cosmopolitan magazine on full display at a Walmart in Toronto. Walmart Canada says it will keep the magazine out in the open while U.S. Walmart will shield the front cover text. (CBC)

Toronto Walmart shoppers who spoke with CBC News were not bothered by full frontal Cosmo at checkout.

"Best Sex Ever: Love, Fun, and Butterflies," shouts the front cover of the latest edition. It didn't faze Tammy White, a mother of two children, who said she believes kids today are exposed to a lot of sexual content and have the tools to deal with it.

"They're getting sex education in school starting in Grade 2. They're fully aware of a lot of things," she said.

"It's farfetched," commented Tanya States about the concept of covering up Cosmo. The mother of a 9-year-old daughter believes the magazine does not fall into the category of porn. "You can see her cleavage," she said, referring to the magazine's front cover, "But Playboy and Cosmopolitan [are] not at all in the same league."

Cosmopolitan magazine also doesn't feel anyone needs to be protected from its publication.

"The idea that the magazine should be classified as pornography is laughable," stated Hearst Corporation in an email. The publisher of Cosmo said the magazine "presents an honest look at women's sexuality," along with coverage on a gamut of issues such as careers, health, finance, beauty and fashion.

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| **Related Questions:**   1. What is main idea of this article? (Comprehension) 2. Based on your experience with reading Cosmopolitan Magazine and/or from the information provided about it in this article, do you think it should be shielded from people eighteen years of age and younger? Explain. (Evaluation) 3. Imagine that you are the owner of a business that sells magazines. How would you respond to being asked to cover up your Cosmopolitan Magazines? (Evaluation) |