

teen talk

What You Should Know About Contraception!

Teen Talk #3

The Basics

“What is contraception?”

Contraception (also known as birth control) refers to the many different methods of preventing pregnancy. Abstinence from sexual activity until marriage is the only 100% sure contraception. Also, abstinent teens are not at risk for pregnancy or STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Teens who choose to be sexually active should remain faithful (not have sex with anyone else) to reduce the possibility of getting or giving someone an STD or HIV/AIDS. The latex condom is the only contraceptive method that may provide protection against some STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Research shows that latex condoms may not be effective against some STDs such as Human Papilloma Virus (HPV - the virus that causes genital warts.)

“Who needs contraception?”

Anyone who has sex and doesn't want to get pregnant or get someone pregnant needs contraception. Any time you have sex, there is a risk of pregnancy. Not having sex—abstinence—is the only 100% sure way to avoid pregnancy.



Know The Facts...True or False

Everyone's 'doing it.'

FALSE...Everyone's not 'doing it.' Four out of 5 teens under age 16 have never had sex.

Most teens who get pregnant or get someone pregnant want to be parents.

FALSE...82 percent of all teen pregnancies are unintended.

A girl can get pregnant if it's her first time having sex.

TRUE...If she has sex, she can become pregnant even if she has never had a period. It is important to know that the menstrual cycle begins before the menstrual period. Girls can ovulate (release an egg) and become pregnant before seeing their first period.

Pulling out is a very good way to keep from getting a girl pregnant.

FALSE...Some semen leaks before ejaculation. You can get a girl pregnant even if you withdraw (pull out). And it's difficult to withdraw just before ejaculating (sometimes called 'cumming').

Continued on the other side.

“Are some methods of contraception better than others at preventing pregnancy?”

Yes. Abstinence is the only 100% sure way to not get pregnant. If you choose to have sex, know that some contraception methods are more effective than others, but no other method offers you total assurance. To be effective, whatever method you choose must be used correctly and consistently. Always read and follow the package instructions. It is a good idea to discuss this with your health provider.

“Is the condom the only kind of contraception for males?”

No. Vasectomy is a permanent method of contraception. But the condom is the most common method used by young males. Remember, the condom not only protects you from getting (or getting someone) pregnant, it may also provide protection against HIV/AIDS and some other STDs.

“How do I decide which method of contraception to use?”

Your health care provider can help you decide which method is best for you.

Remember, even if you are using a method like the pill, the latex condom is the only method that may provide some protection against HIV/AIDS and some STDs.

“Do I need a prescription to get contraception?”

Latex condoms can be purchased without a prescription, but other methods require one. Even if you use a nonprescription method, it is a good idea to see a health care provider on a regular basis.



Contraceptive Methods

Hormonal Methods

Hormonal methods prevent pregnancy by interrupting the normal process for becoming pregnant. Hormonal methods do not protect against STDs.

Emergency Contraception—Hormonal pills that are taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex or method failure (e.g., the condom broke or you forgot to take your pill). Emergency contraception is the only method that can be used after having sex to prevent pregnancy.

Hormonal Implant—Small capsules inserted under the skin of a woman's upper arm that release small amounts of a hormone.

Hormonal Injection—A hormone injection ("shot") that is injected into a woman's arm or buttock on a regular basis (every 1 to 3 months, depending on the hormones).

Hormonal Patch—A thin beige patch containing hormones that a woman applies to her skin once a week for three weeks. Hormones that prevent pregnancy are released during the time the patch is on. The woman removes it for one week, during which time she has her period.

The Pill—A pill for women that must be taken at the same time every day.

Vaginal Ring—A ring containing hormones that a woman puts into her vagina and leaves there for three weeks. Hormones that prevent pregnancy are released for that time. The woman removes it for one week, during which time she has her period.

Barrier Methods

Barrier methods prevent sperm from reaching the egg.

Condom/Rubber—A cover for the penis or vagina. Latex condoms may provide protection against some STDs, including HIV/AIDS.

Diaphragm/Cervical Cap—A shallow latex cup which the woman puts into her vagina, covering the cervix, before having sex. The diaphragm is generally used with a spermicidal jelly or cream that stops or kills sperm.



July 1999, Reprinted September 2001, Updated March 2003

Other Methods

Abstinence—Not having vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse. Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent pregnancy and STDs, including HIV/AIDS.

Intra-Uterine Device (IUD)—An IUD is a small plastic device that is inserted into a woman's uterus by a trained clinician. Those used in the U.S. contain copper or hormones. This method is not generally recommended for teens, but is excellent for faithful married couples.

Natural Family Planning—Not having sex during the 5 or 6 days of the month when it is possible for the woman to get pregnant. Specialized training is essential for using this method.

Spermicide—A cream, foam, jelly or insert which kills sperm. Spermicides do not protect against STDs or HIV/AIDS. Nonoxynol-9, the most common spermicide, may increase the risk of HIV/AIDS in individuals who are at risk for an STD or HIV/AIDS.

Sterilization—A permanent, surgical form of contraception that blocks the fallopian tubes in women (tubal ligation) and the vas deferens in men (vasectomy).

Withdrawal—Removing the penis from the vagina before ejaculation. It may not prevent pregnancy, because some semen may leak before ejaculation.

True or False...

continued from the front

Contraception is the girl's responsibility.

FALSE...Contraception is both partners' responsibility. Every baby has a father and a mother, and both males and females can get STDs, including HIV/AIDS.

If you use contraception, you can still get pregnant or get a girl pregnant.

TRUE...Nothing is 100% sure except abstinence — not having sex (vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse).

All contraceptive methods protect against STDs, including HIV/AIDS.

FALSE...Most contraceptive methods do not protect against STDs, including HIV/AIDS. But latex condoms may provide some protection. Without a latex condom, STDs can be passed from person to person during vaginal, oral, or anal sex. While some STDs are curable, others are not. Even when another form of contraception is used, it is important to also use a latex condom to provide as much protection as possible. Abstinence is the only 100% sure way to protect against risk of STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Faithful married couples are at very low risk for STDs.

For additional copies, please contact: Office of Population Affairs Clearinghouse

Email: clearinghouse@dhhsopa.net • Phone: 866 640-PUBS (7827) • Fax: 866 592-FAXX (3299)

Mail: PO Box 30686, Bethesda, MD 20824-0686 • Copies available for download at website: <http://opa.osophs.dhhs.gov/publications>