

Making the Right Choice

Facts for Teens on Preventing Pregnancy

Guidelines for Teens



This brochure contains facts to help you make choices about your health and preventing pregnancy. Many people your age find it hard to talk about things like whether or not to have sex or types of birth control methods. The facts in this brochure will help you make informed choices that are right for you.

You can abstain from sex

You may be feeling a lot of pressure to have sex. Maybe the person you are dating, your friends, or other kids are pushing you to do it. Maybe it seems like “everyone is doing it.”

Fact: There is nothing strange about waiting to have sex. Half of all teens say “no” to sex.

Fact: Before you find yourself in a situation that could lead to sex, make up your mind to say “no.” Then stick with your decision. Many young women get pregnant from having unplanned sex.

Fact: Many young people have sex without meaning to when they drink alcohol or use drugs. Not using alcohol and drugs will help you make clearer choices about sex.

Fact: Sex has health risks. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like chlamydia, herpes, and AIDS can affect males and females for life. Also, teens have a higher risk of medical problems when they are pregnant and give birth.

Fact: Teen parents may find it hard to finish school. This can limit the types of jobs they can get and may affect their income.

Sexually active teens should know the following facts about the condom:

Fact: The condom is the **only** birth control method that protects against STDs.

Fact: Because condoms protect against STDs, you should use a latex condom every time you have sex—no matter what other type of birth control you and your partner might also use.

Fact: The condom is the only effective method of birth control for males.

Fact: If you use a condom the right way, it has a 90% chance of preventing pregnancy.

Fact: Withdrawal (when the male “pulls out” of the female before he ejaculates) does not prevent pregnancy. Even if a small amount of sperm enters a woman, pregnancy can occur.

Sexually active teens should know the following facts about female contraceptives:

Fact: “The pill” is the most popular type of birth control used by women. There are many brands of the birth control pill. For the pill to work, a woman must take it everyday. There are higher risks for heavy smokers who take the pill.

Fact: Of those women who use the pill properly, 99 of 100 will not get pregnant.

Fact: Depo-Provera is a popular choice of birth control for women who sometimes forget to take the pill everyday. It is also a good choice for females with special medical problems. This type of birth control is given as a shot every 3 months. It prevents pregnancy during that whole time.

Fact: The pill and Depo-Provera may cause a few minor side effects. You could have mild irregular bleeding, tender breasts, or a slight weight gain. On the upside, your periods may be shorter and lighter, and you may have few or no cramps.

Fact: Another type of birth control is Norplant. Norplant is made up of six capsules the size of matchsticks, which are put into a woman's arm. Each capsule contains a chemically made hormone that is released into the blood over a period of 5 years to prevent pregnancy. Norplant will protect against pregnancy for 5 years, you can have the capsules removed at any time. A common side effect of Norplant is irregular bleeding.

There are other types of birth control that are not recommended for young people.

Fact: Other birth control methods such as diaphragms and spermicides require some planning. The teenage pregnancy rate using these methods is very high.

Fact: Natural family planning, sometimes called the “rhythm method,” also has a high failure rate for young people. Using this method means you cannot have sex during certain times of a woman's monthly cycle.

It is important to discuss different birth control methods with a health professional. Your pediatrician can let you know how safe and effective these methods are, what side effects they can cause, and how much they cost.

The choice is yours

The choice to become sexually involved is yours to make. Remember that even though some people your age decide to have sex, just as many people decide not to. Choosing not to have sex is the only way to avoid all STDs and getting pregnant.

If you do choose to have sex, you need to make plans to prevent pregnancy and avoid catching an STD. Whether you are male or female, **a latex condom should be used every time you have sex to protect yourself from STDs.** However, not having sex is the best way to protect against STDs.

Birth control methods that work best for young women include:

- the birth control pill taken everyday
- a shot of Depo-Provera every 3 months
- Norplant capsules placed under the skin, which last for 5 years

For more information on preventing pregnancy, see your pediatrician or health clinic.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

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