

Commonly Asked Questions Regarding Sexual Health

For answers to even more sexual health questions check out TxTina, an Iowa resource. Talking Sex Together (TxT) uses mobile networks and social media (Snapchat and Twitter) to foster two-way communication with teens about safe sex and sexual health. Teens subscribe to the TxT program by texting “Tina” to 877877 and are then opted-in to receive weekly text messages each Friday with facts, quizzes, polls and thought starters related to sexual health on the second and fourth Friday of the month. (www.EyesOpenIowa.org)

- 1. What is a Nuva Ring?** A soft flexible ring that is prescribed as a method of birth control. She inserts it into her vagina, leaves it in for 3 weeks. The slow release of hormones from the ring, prevent her from releasing an egg (ovulating), thereby preventing pregnancy at rate of 99.7%
- 2. What type of condom gives you the most protection?** The kind you will use correctly, each and every time! *No brand or type promoted here, just individual preference, so try different ones till you find the kind you prefer.*
- 3. Which contraceptive is the most effective?** Long-Acting-Reversible Contraception (LARC) are the most effective forms of birth control. Examples include the IUD (Intra Uterine Device), and the Nexplanon implant. Hormonal methods such as the Depo Provera, (the shot) the Pill, the Patch and the Ring are next most effective (if used correctly). Surgical procedures such as the vasectomy for men, and the tubal ligation for women are highly effective for those certain they want to permanently end their fertility. *The way to insure the maximum effectiveness of any birth control method is to use it correctly, every time.*
- 4. Do you get a period if you are on the Depo Shot?** Some do, most don't.
- 5. Where do you go to get the birth control pill, to the store or the doctor?** The pill must be prescribed by a medical provider such as a family doctor, a family planning clinic-such as Allen Women's Health or Planned Parenthood.
- 6. How do you know if a birth control method is “right” for you?** Doctors and/or medical providers will help you find what is best for you. Often patients simply try one they think will be one they will use correctly. When they find that it is easy to use AND they do use it as directed, without forgetting AND they get the result they wanted, (no pregnancy), then they may consider it “right” for them.
- 7. Are there any risks for women taking “The Pill”?** Some women experience some side effects that they are unwilling to put up with, such as headaches, moodiness, and much less often, serious side effects such as blood clots or stroke. Most others, do not. Pregnancy can produce some unwanted side effects as well. Whether or not to use a method such as “The Pill” is a personal choice.
- 8. Do women that get the Depo Shot still get their periods?** Some do, but usually lighter periods and for fewer days than before they started “the shot”. One side effect may be breakthrough bleeding between periods, especially during the first 3 to 6 months of use.
- 9. What is the possibility of getting pregnant while using contraceptives?** There are different effectiveness rates for different contraceptives. When NOT used as directed, all of them are less effective than they would be if used correctly. See the Allen Women's Health website: www.allenwomenshealth.org.
- 10. Do you have to be a certain age to have sex?** Iowa law says a youth cannot legally consent to sexual activity until at least 14 years of age. The law further states that if under 16 years of age, they cannot give consent to a partner 4 years (or more) older than they are.

- 11. Which birth control method is the safest besides abstinence?** Condoms ~ for protection against Sexually Transmitted Disease *along with* a hormonal method such as the Pill, the Shot, the Implant, IUD or the Nuva Ring for protection against pregnancy.
- 12. What does “the Pill” do?** The hormone(s) in the Pill; Progesterone and sometimes Estrogen, suppresses (stops) the release of the female’s egg. No egg? No pregnancy. The Pill also makes the female’s vaginal fluids change, making it more difficult for sperm to “swim”.
- 13. If performing oral sex, (mouth-to-genitals) can you get Herpes or something in the mouth?** Yes, if the person they are performing oral sex on is infected with Genital Herpes.
- 14. Where do they put the Depo Shot at?** It is usually injected in the buttocks. Sometimes in the upper arm.
- 15. Could you do damage to a baby if you use birth control while pregnant?** Despite years of this accidentally happening, there isn’t evidence that exposure to the hormones in birth control cause birth defects. However, upon becoming aware of a pregnancy, birth control pills should be discontinued. The extra hormones are not needed.
- 16. How old do you have to be to get birth control?** There is not an age requirement, but the decision is something to discuss with a medical provider. Females of any age that are having sexual intercourse are eligible for birth control, with or without their parent’s knowledge.
- 17. How much does it cost for an abortion?** Anywhere from \$350 to about \$2,000, depending on the clinic, how far along the pregnancy is and the person’s ability to pay.
- 18. Can you get pregnant without your period?** The time in a woman’s cycle when pregnancy is most likely to happen, is several of the days in between her periods; the days just before, during, and right after ovulation (release of the egg). If she has NEVER had her period, and she has sex, she **can** become pregnant from that sex, because she may be ovulating just before, during, or a few days after that sexual activity.
- 19. What is the percentage of condoms ripping?** According to Consumer Reports most condom breakage is due to human error, not defective condoms.
- 20. How can you get Sexually Transmitted Diseases without having sex?** Bodily fluids known to spread HIV/AIDS and some other infections are: vaginal fluids (moisture in a female’s vagina), semen (fluid that leaves a male’s penis during sexual arousal), blood and breast milk. Anytime one of these fluids from one infected person’s body comes into contact with another person’s bodily fluid, the infection can be transmitted. This includes needle sharing, such as drug use, tattoos and body piercing needles. Still other STDs can be transmitted by skin to skin contact with the infected area, such as Herpes, genital warts (HPV) and Syphilis.
- 21. What is “the morning after pill”?** Also known as “Plan B”, and “Emergency Contraception”, this is the same hormone, but in different strength, as the birth control pill. It can prevent a pregnancy if taken soon after (within 5 days) sexual intercourse. It works in three ways. 1. Prevents her ovary from releasing an egg. 2. Changes the lining of the uterus, making it difficult for fertilized egg to attach. 3. And possibly, thickens the vaginal fluid, making it more difficult for sperm to make its way to the uterus. Emergency Contraception (EC) is available for purchase at most pharmacies. Family Planning Clinics such as Allen Women’s Health dispense EC for no or low cost.