



## Commonly Asked Questions Regarding Sexual Health

For answers to even more sexual health questions check out TxTina, an Iowa resource. Talking Sex Together (TxTina) 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 TxTina program by texting “Tina” to 877877 and are then opted-in to receive 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](http://www.EyesOpenIowa.org)

**1. Which birth control 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.*

**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.* All condoms sold in the U.S. pass the same quality measures. And don't forget, Dental Dams should be used for protection during oral sex.

**3. 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. Don't stop your birth control unless you have had a positive pregnancy test.

**4. Do you get a period if you are on the Depo Shot?** Some do, but usually lighter periods and for fewer days than before they started “the shot”. One side effect may be break-through bleeding between periods, especially during the first 3 to 6 months of use.

**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 nurse practitioner, a doctor or 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 taking “The Pill”?** Some people 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. What is the possibility of getting pregnant while using birth control?** 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 Center For Disease Control website:

[https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/pdf/contraceptive\\_methods\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/pdf/contraceptive_methods_508.pdf)

**9. 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.

- 10. Which birth control method is the safest besides abstinence?** Condoms ~ for protection against Sexually Transmitted Disease *along with* an Implant or the IUD. Using any hormonal method along with a condom is good protection from STD and pregnancy.
- 11. 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 vaginal fluids change, making it more difficult for sperm to “swim”.
- 12. 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. Many other STDs can be shared in this manner.
- 13. Where do they put the Depo Shot at?** It is usually injected in the buttocks. Sometimes in the upper arm.
- 14. 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 two ways. 1. Prevents her ovary from releasing an egg. 2. 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.
- 15. How old do you have to be to get birth control?** Allen Women’s Health does not require patients to be a certain age to receive services, nor do we require a teen to inform their parent about birth control or any other service at Allen Women’s Health, however, we know that families can be very supportive and we encourage, but don’t require, teens to discuss their care with a parent or other trusted adult. People of any age that are having sexual intercourse are eligible for birth control, with or without their parent’s knowledge. This includes condoms and dental dams.
- 16. 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.
- 17. Can you get pregnant without your period?** The time in a menstrual cycle when pregnancy is most likely to happen, is several of the days in between periods; the days just before, during, and right after ovulation (release of the egg). If someone with a uterus has NEVER had a period, and has sex, they **can** become pregnant from that sex, because they may be ovulating just before, during, or a few days after that sexual activity.
- 18. What is the percentage of condoms ripping?** According to Consumer Reports most condom breakage is due to human error, not defective condoms. For more information on correct condom usage, go to [www.factsaboutcondoms.com](http://www.factsaboutcondoms.com).
- 19. 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 vagina), semen (fluid that leaves a penis during sexual arousal), anal fluid (moisture in a rectum), blood and breast milk. Anytime one of these fluids from an infected person’s body enters the body of another STDs 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.
- 20. Can someone get pregnant from anal sex?** The short answer is no. However, due to the anal opening being so close to the vaginal opening, if semen were to be spilled onto the vulva, it is possible it could make its way into the vagina and then into the uterus and fallopian tubes. Rare, but possible.