

Rationale

The FLASH curriculum includes birth control methods and abstinence in full lessons of their own, based on the effectiveness of both approaches¹. Research has repeatedly shown that sexual health education, including teaching about birth control, does not cause teens to have sex sooner or more often.¹²³⁴⁵⁶ Its only impact is preventative.

In this lesson, birth control is framed positively. Multiple teen pregnancy prevention studies demonstrate that having "more positive attitudes towards contraception, including condoms" and "perceiving more benefits of using contraception" are important protective factors against teen pregnancy.⁷ Hence, in this lesson, students develop commercials to emphasize the positive aspects of birth control using medically accurate information. Students are not expected to memorize effectiveness rates, how each method of birth control works, or contraindications. If students should be interested in a prescription method at some point in their life, their medical providers will cover this information.

Students are not given the failure rates or side effects of birth control methods.

Selection of methods in the lesson

This lesson focuses on a subset of birth control methods, rather than every method, in order to achieve sufficient depth in one class period and to achieve teen pregnancy prevention goals. The nine methods focused on in this lesson were based on King County and national data on teen contraceptive use.⁸⁹ The type of condom that is worn in the vagina or anus (sometimes called a female condom) is addressed in STD and HIV prevention lessons.

Teachers are encouraged to have information, samples or reference material about all methods of birth control, including those that the lesson doesn't directly address, so they can answer questions that may arise. Medically updated websites are suggested in teacher preparation section of this lesson and in the Sexual Health Resources student handout and the, for teacher background and for students who wish to learn more in-depth information about all FDA approved methods.

Inclusion of IUD

IUDs are now known to be safe and appropriate birth control for teens. They have been redesigned from IUDs used in the past. They are safe and effective for people who have been pregnant and those who haven't, including teens. Not only are they extremely safe, IUDs are among the most effective methods of birth control available; the hormonal ones are more effective than sterilization. They do not impair future fertility, and they do not increase the risk of STDs or HIV.^{10 11 12}

Inclusion of withdrawal

Despite the physical challenges inherent in using withdrawal effectively, we include it because withdrawal is more effective than previously thought and withdrawal is common among teens, free, and always available. In fact, when withdrawal is used correctly for vaginal sex, experts calculate that only 4% of couples are likely to get pregnant in a year. Taking typical human error into account, 22% would get pregnant, which is comparable to the diaphragm, sponge and other spermicides.¹³

In contrast, over three times as many couples (85%) would get pregnant using no method for a year, making withdrawal *significantly* more effective than using nothing. It should also be noted that withdrawal reduces the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and the human