

THE FOG ZONE

How Misperceptions, Magical Thinking and Ambivalence Put Young Adults at Risk for Unplanned Pregnancy

Contraception and Pregnancy: The True and the False QUESTIONS

CONDOMS

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. It is okay to use the same condom more than once. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 2. Condoms have an expiration date. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 3. When putting on a condom, it is important to leave a space at the tip. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 4. It is okay to use petroleum jelly or Vaseline as a lubricant when using latex condoms. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 5. When using a condom, it is important for the man to pull out right after ejaculation. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 6. Wearing two latex condoms will provide extra protection. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |

BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Birth control pills are effective even if a woman misses taking them for two or three days in a row. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 2. Women should "take a break" from the pill every couple of years. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 3. If a woman is having side effects with one kind of pill, switching to another type or brand might help. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 4. Birth control pills reduce the chances that women will get certain types of cancer. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 5. After a woman stops taking birth control pills, she is unable to get pregnant for at least two months. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 6. In order to get the birth control pill, a woman must have a pelvic exam. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |

IUDs

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. All IUDs are banned from use in the United States. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 2. A woman can use an IUD, even if she has never had a child. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 3. Women who use IUDs cannot use tampons. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 4. To obtain an IUD, a woman must undergo a surgical operation. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 5. An IUD cannot be felt by a woman's partner during sex. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |
| 6. IUDs can move around in a woman's body. | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUE | <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE |

Questions continued on reverse →

OTHER HORMONAL METHODS

1. Women using the birth control shot, Depo Provera, must get an injection every 3 months. TRUE FALSE
2. Even if a woman is late getting her birth control shot, she is still protected from pregnancy for at least 3 more months. TRUE FALSE
3. Negative effects that a woman has from Depo Provera can last for the rest of her life. TRUE FALSE
4. Women using the vaginal ring, NuvaRing, must have it inserted by a doctor or health care provider every month. TRUE FALSE
5. Long-acting methods like the implant or IUD cannot be removed early, even if a woman changes her mind about wanting to get pregnant. TRUE FALSE

PREGNANCY

1. After giving birth, a woman can get pregnant even before she has her first period. TRUE FALSE
2. Douching (washing the vagina) after sex can prevent pregnancy. TRUE FALSE
3. A woman who is still breast feeding cannot get pregnant. TRUE FALSE
4. Pregnancy is much less likely to occur if a couple has sex standing up. TRUE FALSE
5. The only way to completely prevent pregnancy is by not having sex. TRUE FALSE
6. During a woman's monthly cycle, are there certain days when she is more likely to become pregnant if she has sex? TRUE FALSE
7. For most women, the time when she is more likely to get pregnant is...
 - A. just before her period begins; A
 - B. during her period; B
 - C. right after her period has ended; or C
 - D. halfway between two periods. D

Contraception and Pregnancy: The True and the False ANSWERS

CONDOMS

- **It is okay to use the same condom more than once: FALSE**

Each condom provides protection against pregnancy for one act of intercourse. Even if the man doesn't ejaculate, condoms should not be used again because they might be weakened from the first act of intercourse, and they could be more likely to break.

- **Condoms have an expiration date: TRUE**

Condoms are made of latex, and latex breaks down over time. A condom that is past its expiration date is weaker and more likely to break; it provides much less effective protection. Heat and friction can also weaken the condom, so it is not a good idea to store condoms in a place where they will be exposed to your body heat for more than a short period of time.

- **When putting on a condom, it is important to leave a space at the tip: TRUE**

If there is no space at the tip, the condom may break when the man ejaculates, because there is nowhere for the ejaculate ("cum") to go. Most condoms have a small area at the tip of the condom, called the "reservoir tip," which is built in to make room for the man to ejaculate without breaking the condom. If you are using a condom without this special tip, just make sure to pinch a small area at the tip of the condom and hold it as you roll the condom down the length of the penis.

- **It is okay to use petroleum jelly or Vaseline as a lubricant when using latex condoms: FALSE**

Vaseline (petroleum jelly) can break down the latex in condoms, making it more likely that they will break and put you at risk of getting pregnant. You can buy condoms that are already lubricated, or you can purchase special lubricants like K-Y Jelly that are meant to be used with condoms.

- **When using a condom, it is important for the man to pull out right after ejaculation: TRUE**

After a man ejaculates ("comes") he begins to lose his erection. When this happens, the condom is no longer tightly fitted to the penis, and sperm can leak out. This can put a couple at risk of getting pregnant. After a man ejaculates, he should hold the condom on to the base of his penis with his hand while he pulls out.

- **Wearing two latex condoms will provide extra protection: FALSE**

It may seem like a good idea, but wearing two condoms at once will actually raise your risk of getting pregnant. When the two condoms rub against each other during sex, the friction can create little rips in the latex, and the condom is more likely to break. One condom, used correctly, will provide 98% effective protection against pregnancy. So there's no need to double up!

BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

- **Birth control pills are effective even if a woman misses taking them for two or three days in a row: FALSE**

Birth control pills are designed to keep a steady level of hormones in the woman's body, and this is how they prevent pregnancy. When pills are missed, that level can drop too low, and the pill no longer provides effective pregnancy protection. For instructions on what to do when you miss a pill, ask your health care provider or read the insert in your pill package.

- **Women should "take a break" from the pill every couple of years: FALSE**

There is no medical reason why women need to take a break from the pill. Women may safely use pills for 5, 10, or 20 years without ever taking a "break."

- **If a woman is having side effects with one kind of pill, switching to another type or brand might help: TRUE**

Different brands of birth control pills have different combinations of hormones, and different dosages too. Some women may react badly to one brand but have no negative reaction to another. Talk to your health care provider about the best options for you.

- **Birth control pills reduce the chances that women will get certain types of cancer: TRUE**

The risk of endometrial cancer (cancer of the lining of the uterus) and cancer of the ovaries actually goes down the longer you are on the pill. After one year, endometrial-cancer risk decreases by 50 percent; after 10 years, the risks are 80 percent lower than normal. Evidence of a link between pill use and breast cancer is still inconclusive. However, the most recent medical literature suggests that the pill has little, if any, effect on the risk of developing breast cancer.

- **After a woman stops taking birth control pills, she is unable to get pregnant for at least two months: FALSE**

After a woman stops the pill, her fertility typically returns to normal and she can get pregnant if she doesn't use another method.

- **In order to get the birth control pill, a woman must have a pelvic exam: FALSE**

It is a good idea for all women to have regular gynecological check-ups that include a pap test and pelvic exam, but this is no longer considered necessary for initiation or use of hormonal contraception. Many providers will now offer hormonal contraception without conducting a pelvic exam; by taking a woman's blood pressure and a medical history, a clinician will be able to determine if hormonal methods are safe for her.

IUDs

- **All IUDs are banned from use in the United States: FALSE**

IUDs are safe and available throughout the United States. In the 1970s, there was a different kind of IUD on the market that was linked to serious infections in some women. That IUD was banned from sale in the U.S. more than 30 years ago. Today, there are two kinds of IUDs available in the U.S.—Mirena and ParaGard; both are safe and do not cause the serious side effects linked to the earlier IUD.

- **A woman can use an IUD, even if she has never had a child: TRUE**

A woman can use an IUD, even if she has never given birth. It is now clear that the IUD does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future and can be safely used by women who have never been pregnant or had a baby. After the IUD is removed, most women are able to become pregnant as quickly as women who have never used an IUD.

- **Women who use IUDs cannot use tampons: FALSE**

The IUD does not interfere with tampon use. The IUD sits in the uterus, while tampons are placed in the vagina.

- **To obtain an IUD, a woman must undergo a surgical operation: FALSE**

Women do not need a surgical operation to obtain an IUD. A woman who is getting an IUD must go to her health care provider's office, and a clinician will insert the IUD into the uterus through the vaginal canal. The procedure can cause temporary discomfort and cramping, but it does not involve surgery or anesthesia.

- **An IUD cannot be felt by a woman's partner during sex: TRUE**

It is very unlikely that a woman's partner will feel an IUD. The actual IUD stays inside the woman's uterus, and there are two very fine thin strings that descend into the vaginal canal. Women using an IUD periodically should check that these strings are in place, but it is rare that her partner would feel them during sex, and impossible to feel the IUD itself.

- **IUDs can move around in a woman's body: FALSE**

The IUD is placed in the uterus, and it does not move around. Very rarely, a woman may expel the IUD from the uterus, in which case it would just come out of the vagina.

OTHER HORMONAL METHODS

- **Women using the birth control shot, Depo Provera, must get an injection every 3 months: TRUE**

The birth control shot provides 3 months (12 weeks) of protection against pregnancy. This means that women who use the shot must return to their health care provider every 3 months to repeat the injection.

- **Even if a woman is late getting her birth control shot, she is still protected from pregnancy for at least 3 more months: FALSE**

The birth control shot provides 3 months (12 weeks) of protection against pregnancy. Once those three months have gone by, the shot's effectiveness wears off. Women who use the shot must receive their injection every three months to maintain pregnancy protection.

- **Negative effects that a woman has from Depo Provera can last for the rest of her life: FALSE**

Some women do experience side effects from Depo Provera, including changes in their menstrual bleeding patterns, changes in sex drive, changes in appetite or weight, headaches, mood swings, sore breasts, nausea and rashes. When a woman stops using the shot, these side effects will also stop, though it may take several months for the hormones to completely leave her body.

- **Women using the vaginal ring, NuvaRing, must have it inserted by a doctor or health care provider every month: FALSE**

Women must visit their health care provider to get their first NuvaRing prescription, but the clinician does not insert the ring. The NuvaRing is inserted by the woman using it, just like a tampon, and it is changed once per month.

- **Long-acting methods like the implant or IUD cannot be removed early, even if a woman changes her mind about wanting to get pregnant: FALSE**

Long acting methods can be removed at any time, and fertility will return to its normal level.

PREGNANCY

- **After giving birth, a woman can get pregnant even before she has her first period: TRUE**

It is possible for a woman to get pregnant after giving birth, even if she has not yet had a period. Most women will ovulate before having a period, and if a woman has sex around the time of ovulation, it is very possible for her to get pregnant.

- **Douching (washing the vagina) after sex can prevent pregnancy: FALSE**

Douching or washing the vagina after sex does NOT prevent pregnancy. The sperm cannot be washed out, and douching

can even push them farther up into the vagina, increasing the risk of pregnancy. Douching can also leave a woman more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, because it can irritate the walls of the vagina, and infections can be passed on more easily through broken or irritated skin.

- **A woman who is still breast feeding cannot get pregnant: FALSE**

Breastfeeding does provide some protection against pregnancy, but only among woman who are exclusively breastfeeding. This means that a woman feeds her baby at least 6 times a day with both breasts, does not substitute other foods for breast milk, and feeds her baby every 4 hours during the day and every 6 hours at night. Women who are supplementing with infant formula, or who begin to introduce other foods into an infant's diet, are at risk of pregnancy and cannot count on continued breastfeeding to provide pregnancy protection.

- **Pregnancy is much less likely to occur if a couple has sex standing up: FALSE**

Pregnancy can occur if a couple is standing up, sitting down, lying sideways, or in any other position you can think of. There is no sex position that provides protection against pregnancy.

- **The only way to completely prevent pregnancy is by not having sex: TRUE**

Abstaining from sex is the only 100% effective way to prevent pregnancy. However, many birth control methods are safe, effective, and available at a relatively low cost.

- **During a woman's monthly cycle, are there certain days when she is more likely to become pregnant if she has sex? YES**

For most women, the time when she is more likely to get pregnant is...

- just before her period begins;
- during her period;
- right after her period has ended; or
- halfway between two periods.

The correct answer is **(d), halfway between two periods**. This is the time when ovulation is most likely to occur.