

Report: Teenagers often shun condoms

Relationships may be factor

By Sharon Jayson
USA TODAY

Most sexually active teenagers don't regularly use condoms, which puts them at risk of sexually transmitted diseases, a report suggests.

Almost half (47%) of teen boys who had intercourse in the year before being surveyed said they always use a condom, but only 28% of girls said a condom was used.

The report on teens and contraception is to be released Monday by Child Trends, a nonprofit research center in Washington, D.C. It analyzed federal data on unmarried teens ages 15 through 19, collected in 2002 by the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention.

The study focuses only on sexually active teens — the 46% in that age group who have ever had sexual intercourse.

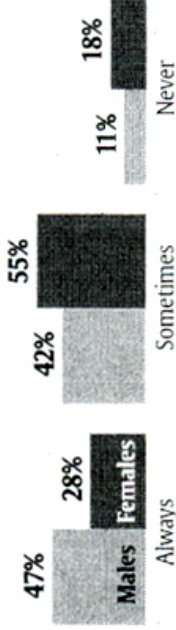
"Condom use declines a little with age, and more serious relationships are less likely to use condoms," report co-author Jennifer Manlove says. "At first sexual intercourse, folks are more likely to use condoms for pregnancy and disease prevention, but as they are more sexually experienced, they are more likely to switch to other methods of birth control."

Amber Madison, 22, author of *Hooking Up: A Girl's All-Out Guide to Sex & Sexuality*, to be published next month, speculates that the gender differences in condom use are related to sex within a relationship rather than casual sex.

"My guess is you have teenage guys having more one-

Part-time protection

Young people ages 15 to 19 who have had sexual intercourse in the past 12 months don't consistently use condoms, research suggests:



Note: Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2004 (based on 2002 data)

By Julie Smider, USA TODAY

night stands, and guys are very likely to use a condom during a one-night stand, where with their girlfriends it's not as likely," she says. "If young women are having sex more with their boyfriends, that's probably why they use condoms less, whereas young men are having sex with women they may not know as well."

She also says she knows girls

who use birth control pills for pregnancy protection but still use condoms to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

The report suggests variations in contraception use by race and ethnicity: Hispanic girls are the least likely to use birth control. For both first-time sex and their most recent sex, 36% used contraception, compared with 57% of blacks

and 72% of whites.

Efforts to promote contraceptive use may be having an effect. The teen birth rate has been declining: in 2004 it was 41.2 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19, down from a peak of 61.8 births per 1,000 in 1991, says Child Trends' Kerry Frantzeta, lead author of the report.

About 80% or more of teen pregnancies are unintended, says Sarah Brown, director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

She says the clear message to sexually active teens is that two methods are best: condoms to prevent sexually transmitted disease and a hormonal method, such as birth control pills, implants or a contraceptive patch to prevent pregnancy.

"Most methods aren't 100% effective," she adds. "If you double up, you're dramatically increasing the effectiveness."