

FACILITATOR RESOURCE BIRTH CONTROL—MYTH OR FACT?

Directions: These myth/fact statements are to be used in conjunction with the PowerPoint presentation, *Birth Control Methods*. The goal is to read statements related to a group of birth control methods, then show the slide about those methods, and finally give some information—important things to know—about those methods. So you will intersperse a little teaching into the game. If you're not showing the presentation, simply have participants refer to the slides on the PowerPoint handout.

1. **There are certain positions of intercourse that will help prevent pregnancy (for example, standing up or woman on top).** (Myth.) Some people believe that having sex in certain positions, such as standing up, will force the sperm out of the woman's vagina. In truth, positions during sex have nothing to do with whether or not fertilization occurs. When a man ejaculates, the sperm are deposited well into the vagina. Remember sperm can swim and they will begin to move up through the vagina into the cervix and on into the Fallopian tubes where they can possibly meet up with an egg. It is also a myth that a woman must have an orgasm to get pregnant.
2. **A woman's most fertile time of the monthly cycle is right after her period.** (Myth.) Actually the risky time is rather long. Menstrual cycles vary in length. Let's talk about a perfect 28-day cycle which is four weeks. If you think of the first day of your period as day one, then the risky days are anywhere from day 7 to day 19. That's a long time to be concerned about and also many women don't have 28-day cycles. So bottom line – avoid taking chances any time during the month.
3. **A woman who's had a lot of female (gynecological) problems and hasn't gotten pregnant for a while (although not using birth control) is probably sterile.** (Myth.) A lot of babies have come into the world because women decided that they couldn't get pregnant again. I'm sure some of you know situations like this. Unless your doctor has told you that you definitely cannot get pregnant, you should use birth control if you don't want to have another baby right now.
4. **Implants (Implanon) cause changes in a woman's menstrual flow that can be harmful to her health.** (Myth.) The implant is a rod that contains hormones that is placed under the skin in a woman's arm. Many, but not all, women experience changes in their menstrual bleeding when they use implants. These changes can be annoying but they aren't harmful to a woman's health. It is also not harmful to actually stop menstruating after one or two years of implant use. Blood will not build up inside of the body. Implants are very effective for up to three years but they can be removed sooner if the woman chooses. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #2}*
5. **It is common for an IUD to leave the uterus and travel to a woman's heart or brain or get stuck in her fat if she is overweight.** (Myth.) Because of the way a woman's body is made, that won't happen. Remember the IUD is a small object that is inserted by a health practitioner into the uterus. Think of your body as a home. The uterus is a room in the home and there is only one way in and one way out of the room—through the cervix and out through the vagina. If the IUD gets expelled from the uterus, it would typically come out through the vagina. Note to Facilitators in case participants ask about this: In rare cases IUDs have come through the perforated wall of the uterus into the abdomen (which could require surgery for removal), but can't get to any other parts of the body. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #2}*
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #2:* These are pictures of the IUD and the implant—two long-acting methods that are very effective at preventing pregnancy. Review the notes that accompany this slide.
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #3:* These are some important things to know about the IUD and the implant.

6. **A man who has had a vasectomy will no longer be able to ejaculate.** (Myth.) A vasectomy has absolutely no impact on the way a man ejaculates. His ejaculation will have the same force and the same feeling. There just won't be any sperm in the fluid. Vasectomy is not reversible so you have to be sure you don't want any more children. Vasectomy is nearly 100% effective. It can be done with or without surgery. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #4}*
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #4:* These are pictures of permanent methods of birth control for men and women. Review the notes that accompany this slide.
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #5:* These are some important things to know about the permanent methods.
7. **Birth control pills reduce a woman's risk of getting certain types of cancer (ovarian and endometrial—lining of the uterus).** (Fact.) Although people fear that the pill causes cancer, women on the pill actually have lower rates of two types of cancer—cancer of the ovaries and cancer of the lining of the uterus. 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 goes down 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. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #6}*
8. **Birth control pills cause women to gain weight.** (Myth.) A lot of people believe this and, in fact, older forms of birth control pills had higher hormone levels and did cause weight gain. Today's pills have much lower doses of estrogen and studies show that the pill and most other hormonal methods do not increase weight. However, studies have linked Depo-Provera (the shot) with weight gain. People who are very concerned about weight gain have to consider how much weight might be gained during a pregnancy. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #6}*
9. **Having a baby is more risky to a woman's health than taking birth control pills for a year.** (Fact.) The risk of death from pregnancy and delivery is about 1 in 8,700. Among women taking the pill, the risk of death for nonsmokers aged 15-34 is 1 in 1,667,000 and the risk among nonsmokers aged 35-44 is 1 in 33,300. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #6}*
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #6:* These are pictures of other hormone methods including the pill. Review the notes that accompany this slide.
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #7:* These are some important things to know about these hormone methods.
10. **Women should give their bodies a 'rest' from all birth control every 3-5 years.** (Myth.) There is no reason for a healthy woman to stop using birth control. Regardless of the type of birth control you use, your body does not require you to stop at any point. An IUD that does not contain hormones must be replaced every 10 years. IUDs containing hormones should be replaced every five years. The pill can be taken for as long as 15 or 20 years. Taking a break from a method like the pill often leads to an unplanned pregnancy. Many unplanned pregnancies occur when couples stop using an effective birth control method for one reason or another. So always go back to your health provider and talk it over if you're having problems or feeling uncomfortable with your method.
11. **Condoms have an expiration date.** (Fact.) 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's 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. *{Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #8}*
 - *Show PowerPoint Slide #8:* These are pictures of barrier methods including the condom. Review the notes that accompany this slide.

- *Show PowerPoint Slide #9:* These are some important things to know about barrier methods.
- *Show PowerPoint Slides #10-12:* Briefly review these slides and the notes that accompany them.

12. **Emergency Contraception or Plan B can be taken up to five days after having unprotected sex.**

(Fact.) A lot of people don't know this and are confused because this method is also called the morning after pill. So people think it must be taken the morning after or within 24 hours of having unprotected sex. The package says the pills must be taken within 72 hours...but, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), you can begin taking it up to five days or 120 hours after unprotected sex. Of course, the sooner you take it the better. {Note: refer to PowerPoint slide #13}

- *Show PowerPoint Slide #13:* These are pictures of Plan B or Emergency Contraception. Review the notes that accompany this slide.
- *Show PowerPoint Slide #14:* This slide compares the different methods of birth control. They are shown from left to right in order of effectiveness.
- *Show PowerPoint Slide #15:* This slide lists possible priorities for choosing one of these methods. Ask participants what they would be most concerned about when trying to decide which method would be right for them.

REFERENCES

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy: www.thenationalcampaign.org/survey/facts.aspx

Guttmacher Institute: www.guttmacher.org

Planned Parenthood at 1(800) 230-PLAN: www.plannedparenthood.org