

What's *your* birth control IQ?

Answer Key

The results of a study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy revealed there are shocking gaps in pregnancy-prevention knowledge among single twenty-somethings. One portion of this wide-ranging survey quizzed 2,282 single women and men ages 18 to 29 about their knowledge of contraception and pregnancy. The results? Both sexes flunked. Women scored 6.0 out of 11 on average, while men got a dismal 4.7. Take the quiz and find out *your* birth control IQ!

1. Among couples who have sex regularly, what percent will get pregnant within one year if they use no birth control at all?

- A. 15%
- B. 33%
- C. 60%
- D. 85%
- E. 97%

Less than a third of National Campaign survey respondents answered correctly; the most popular answer was c.

2. If taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, emergency contraception is effective in preventing what percent of pregnancies?

- A. 25%
- B. 58%
- C. 70%
- D. 89%
- E. 99%

Twenty-nine percent of young adults polled answered correctly. Another 28 percent overestimated the effectiveness of emergency contraception.

3. A woman using "the shot" (Depo-Provera) to prevent pregnancy needs to get the shot every ___ month(s).

- A. 1
- B. 3
- C. 6
- D. 12

Encouragingly, nearly two out of three young adults surveyed answered correctly.

4. Which type of birth control can women over the age of 18 get without going to a doctor or clinic?

- A. Emergency contraception
- B. Diaphragm
- C. The patch
- D. None of the above

The most popular answer in the National Campaign survey was d; 69 percent of those polled do not realize that emergency contraception is now available over the counter. In August 2006, the FDA ruled that Plan B, previously a prescription-only drug, could be purchased without a prescription by women 18 and older. (A prescription is still required for minors.)

5. True or false: A woman with a regular 28-day cycle is most likely to get pregnant about two weeks after the first day of her period.

- A. True
- B. False

Only half of survey respondents knew the correct answer: A woman with a regular 26- to 32-day cycle is most likely to get pregnant during days 8 to 19. However, fertility patterns vary from woman to woman and, for some women, from month to month.

6. True or false: Some types of birth control pills are only fully effective if they are taken within the same three-hour time period every day.

- A. True
- B. False

Nearly two thirds of survey respondents gave the correct answer. Although every birth control pill gets better results if taken at the same time daily, the progestin-only "mini-Pill," carries an especially high risk for pregnancy if it's taken inconsistently. If you are taking progestin-only pills and go three hours past your regular time, use a backup method for at least two days.

7. True or false: An IUD (intrauterine device) can only be used by women who have already given birth.

- A. True
- B. False

Fully 56 percent of those polled answered "don't know"; about a third got it right. "Women without a prior pregnancy can definitely use an IUD," says Paul M. Fine, M.D., medical director of Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas.

8. True or false: Pregnancy can happen even if a guy withdraws before ejaculation.

- A. True
- B. False

This was the question with the most correct answers; 91 percent of young adults got it right.

9. True or false: Women taking birth control pills are at increased risk for all types of cancer.

- A. True
- B. False

Four in 10 respondents answered correctly; 23 percent answered true, believing the Pill raises the risk for all cancers. In fact, women who take the Pill for 15 years may cut their risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer by more than half, according to a British study. On the other hand, Pill takers may have a slightly elevated risk of breast and cervical cancer. So what's the bottom line? "For most healthy women who don't smoke, the benefits of the Pill far exceed the risks," says Polly Marchbanks, Ph.D., an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The risks recede once you stop taking oral contraceptives. Regardless, consult your gynecologist to learn what's best for you.

10. True or false: It is necessary to "take a break" from the Pill every couple of years.

- A. True
- B. False

Only 38 percent of young adults polled knew the correct answer: There is no medical reason to periodically suspend your oral contraceptives.

11. True or false: People shouldn't use petroleum jelly (e.g., Vaseline) as a lubricant when using latex condoms.

- A. True
- B. False

About 6 in 10 young adults surveyed knew that oil-based lubricants can cause a condom to break. If you use lubricant, choose a water-based brand.