

# Hormonal Birth Control Demonstrations

## Note to Facilitators:

A typical Teen Talk approach is to take a topic that requires information-giving (lecture style) and to make it interactive by getting youth to guess or participate by answering questions. This can look many different ways, and the number of questions can be reduced, depending on the youth and their willingness to participate. If youth are not actively participating, the facilitator can decide to switch back to a basic lecture style.

## Goals:

- To explain what hormonal birth control is and how it works.
- To demonstrate common hormonal birth control used by youth.
- To highlight the importance of following instructions, side effects, and medication interactions.

## Have Ready:

- If possible, demonstration versions of the pill, Depo Provera, the patch, NuvaRing, ECP and IUD/S.<sup>1</sup>

## Instructions:

- Share the following information with the youth:

**“What types of hormonal birth control have you heard of?”** Explain that these birth control methods contain synthetic hormones (versions of estrogen and/or progesterone) made in a lab that someone who can get pregnant would put into their body.

If someone chooses to take hormonal birth control, it increases the amount of hormones in the body which prevents the egg from being released (ovulation). No ovulation means no pregnancy. Hormonal birth control is very effective at preventing pregnancy, 91-94% for a typical user. <sup>2</sup>

Note: If pregnancy does occur with hormonal birth control it is usually due to incorrect use.

### **Follow Directions:**

The pill is taken at the same time every day, Depo is a shot every 84 days, the ring is worn for 3 weeks, and the patch is worn for a week at a time for 3 weeks.

FYI: A health care provider can advise how long specific method takes before they are considered effective.

Ask the youth, **“What happens if someone is late taking their hormonal method or forgets to take their birth control pill?”** Hormone levels would drop and they could ovulate, making pregnancy a possibility. If someone misses pills, is late for their Depo shot, their patch falls off, or their ring falls out, the birth control won't be effective. Use a condom as a back-up form of birth control until a healthcare provider or pharmacist says they can rely on their hormonal method again.

### **Side Effects:**

Like all medication, hormonal birth control can have side effects. A health care provider should go over potential side effects when giving the prescription. Side effects can include lighter periods (people who have painful menstrual cramps are often given the pill to reduce cramps), no periods at all (common with Depo), spotting (bleeding on non-period days), weight change (loss/gain), tender breasts, less acne, migraines, mood swings, decreased sex drive, and a risk of (increased) depression. If youth have bothersome side effects, encourage them to go to their healthcare provider for advice and/or another brand/type.

**“Since the pill can also reduce acne, lighten periods, and reduce period cramps can you assume that someone who is on the pill is sexually active?”** No.

### **Other Medications (that interact with hormonal birth control):**

Certain medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter, like St. John's Wort and some antibiotics can reduce the effectiveness of hormonal birth control. If medication does effects the birth control, it is important to use a back-up method like condoms.

Note: Drugs and alcohol do not interfere with birth control unless you forget to take it/vomit up the pill. Drugs/alcohol may impair your decision-making ability.

## **Intrauterine Device (System)**

An intrauterine device or system (IUD/S) is a small device that is inserted into the uterus by a health care provider to prevent pregnancy. It has two horizontal “arms” which are folded during insertion, and then unfold into a T-shape. An IUS contains synthetic hormones, IUD are made with copper which affects the way sperm move, so they can’t meet up with the egg. IUDs are effective for up to 2-5 years, depending on the type.

Common side effects with hormonal IUDs might be missed periods, changes in menstrual flow, spotting in between periods, pelvic pain and cysts on the ovary (a collection of fluid within the ovary). Common side effects with copper IUDs might be heavier or longer periods, and spotting in between periods. There may be a higher upfront cost to IUDs, but they last longer than other types of birth control. Most health plans, social assistance programs and Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) will reimburse the cost of an IUD.

FYI: IUDs are about 99% effective at preventing pregnancy; less than one woman out of 100 will become pregnant while using an IUD.

## **Additional Activities:**

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Condom Demo (See STI chapter.)

# Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Birth control kits can be ordered through the Sexuality and Education Resource Center in Winnipeg, [www.serc.mb.ca](http://www.serc.mb.ca).

<sup>2</sup> [www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/birth-control-pill](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/birth-control-pill), accessed, January 2016.