

“Why Don’t & Do Teens Use Birth Control” Brainstorm

Recommended Age: 12+

Goals

- To share accurate information about birth control methods.
- To explore some of the barriers that youth face to using birth control.
- To have a discussion on the reasons youth have for using or not using birth control.
- To identify important things to think about when choosing to use birth control.

Have Ready

- Write on three separate flipcharts: “Why do teens use birth control (including condoms)?” “Why don’t teens use birth control?” “Things to think about when choosing a birth control method.”
- Markers.

Instructions

- Divide the youth into three groups.
- Give each group some markers and one of the flipcharts.
- Introduce the topic, “**What does birth control do?**” “**What are the different types of birth control?**” (pills, patches, condoms, internal condoms, depo, IUD/S, etc.) Mention that while all these can be used for penis-vagina sex to prevent pregnancy, condoms and internal condoms also prevent STIs/HIV and should be used for other types of sex. Note: For STI protection, use a sex dam for mouth on clitoris, vulva, anus, testicles.
- Instruct the groups to write down as many answers as possible. Rotate the flipcharts to another group.
- When the groups are finished, post the lists up in the room and read them over with the whole group, adding to the lists as more suggestions are made.
- If not mentioned by the youth, add the bolded points below.

Sample Flipcharts

Why Don't Teens Use Birth Control?

- **Not having sex/not dating**
- **Did not plan to have sex**
- **Rumours/gossip** (fear of being judged, leading to not carrying safer sex supplies and/or birth control)
- **2STLGBQ+** Note: They may just write 'gay/lesbian.' Normalize same-sex and transgender relationships and make sure the youth know that condoms and sex dams are important for preventing STIs and HIV, even when there isn't a risk of pregnancy. Also note that if someone is trans, has a uterus, and is on hormones, pregnancy may still be possible. They should talk with their health care provider about what options make sense for their body.
- **Want to have a baby** (You may discuss reasons why youth may want to have a baby: to keep partner, pressure from family/community, are ready to, to feel loved and give love.)
- **Drunk/High**
- Don't know where to get it (have limited access)
- Haven't talked to/afraid to talk to partner about birth control
- Prevented from using birth control by partner or family (discuss that teens should have the right to use birth control if they choose)
- Concerned about confidentiality
- Aren't comfortable using birth control
- Values/religion
- Not comfortable with their bodies
- Don't know how to use birth control
- Cost
- Afraid parents/caregivers will find it
- Side effects/allergies

Why Do Teens Use Birth Control?

- **Don't want to get pregnant**
- **Don't want to get an STI/HIV** (condoms and sex dams will help protect against STIs/HIV)

- **Trying to show respect/care about themselves and their partner**
- **Future goals/plans**
- **Regulate their period or lessen cramps** (hormonal birth control only)
- **Control acne** (hormonal birth control only)
- Their friends are using birth control
- Parents/caregivers/partners/doctor pressure them to

Things to Think About When Choosing a Birth Control Method

- **Effectiveness**
- **Comfort with body and partner**
- **Allergies/side effects**
- **Availability/access** (Where to get it and how much?)
- **Concerns about anonymity**
- **What if the birth control fails?** (Normalize talking to a partner beforehand about abortion, adoption, and parenting, and sharing feelings about these options. Ultimately, the person who is pregnant has the right to decide, as their body and life stand to be most affected.)
- Type of relationship
- Is it covered by non-insured health benefit?
- How does it fit into my life? (Drinking, forgetful, etc.)

Debrief

- There are many reasons youth have for using/not using birth control and these are some important things to think about when choosing a birth control method.
- Remind youth that they can get more information about birth control methods and safer sex from a health care provider at teen clinics, health centres, or nursing stations, which can help someone make a decision about what birth control is best for them.

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Birth Control & Condoms Scavenger Hunt
- Hormonal Birth Control Demonstrations
- Plan B: Emergency Contraception Demonstration
- Condom Demo & Internal Condom Demo (see STI chapter)