

SEXtalk)))

Answers to Your Questions about Sex and Relationships

Have a ??? Email sextalk@u.arizona.edu

factoid

78% of UA students know they do NOT need insurance to use the Campus Health Service
(Wellness 2000, n=856)

Q. I have been having sex with my boyfriend and condoms just don't seem to work. I've been on birth control pills for a while but I don't feel comfortable relying on them. I've been considering using a diaphragm or spermicidal lubrication. How effective are these forms of contraceptives and are they practical? Also, where could I get these kinds of contraceptives? Do I have to go to my gynecologist?

A. Actually, as long as you take them everyday, the pill is one of the most reliable methods of birth control that you can use (98-99.5%). Other hormonal contraceptives are even more effective: Depo-Provera and Norplant have pregnancy prevention rates of > 99.5%. Of course, these drugs may have varying side effects in some women (commonly weight gain, breast tenderness, nausea, and irregular bleeding).

Using a diaphragm with spermicidal jelly is much less reliable (80-94%). You must be fitted by an experienced medical provider for a diaphragm, but not necessarily a gynecologist. The staff at the Campus Health Service Women's Health Clinic (doctors or nurse practitioners specializing in women's health) can provide the exam. Diaphragms are sold at the Campus Health pharmacy for \$25. While diaphragms aren't as reliable as the pill, they do not have any side effects and are only used when needed.

The effectiveness of vaginal spermicides (foams, suppositories, gels, film) depends on consistent and correct use. Effectiveness rates among typical users range from 50-95% in the first year, leaving much room for doubt. Spermicides work best when used in combination with barrier methods (condom, cervical cap, diaphragm).

For more information about birth control and to test your knowledge, check out the Contraceptive 101 interactive website at www.health.arizona.edu. Or, click on www.plannedparenthood.org for a thorough website with contraceptive resources.

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