

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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In the U.S., the birth control method utilized by the greatest number of adults is sterilizations (vasectomy and tubal ligation).

Q Can you have sex without a condom if you have an IUD and avoid pregnancy?

A. Yes. An Intrauterine device (IUD) is one of the most effective methods of birth control. When used as your sole method, an IUD provides a 99% contraceptive effectiveness rate. While using a condom will provide an additional measure of pregnancy protection, the IUD alone is one of the most effective methods a woman can choose.

An IUD is a t-shaped device which is inserted into the uterus by a medical provider. It works primarily by preventing sperm from reaching a woman's egg. A short string descends through the cervix into the vagina. Currently there are two types of IUDs available: Mirena (which releases hormones and offers contraceptive benefit for five years) and the ParaGard Copper T (which is made of copper and offers contraceptive benefit for up to 10 years).

In Europe, IUDs are extremely popular and are the #1 method used in some countries. Advantages of IUDs include their high effectiveness rate, long lasting contraception, convenience, and low risk of side effects, cost-effectiveness and the fact that they are well liked by users. Disadvantages include menstrual problems (especially in the first months of use) expulsion (more likely in women who have

not been pregnant) and perforation of the uterus during insertion (less than a 1 in 1,000 chance).

You may have heard of upper genital tract infections in women who used IUDs in the 1970s and 1980s. Rigorous research identified past problems and solutions. The Food and Drug Administration has judged current IUDs to be safe. Today's IUD patient screening and insertion practices are greatly improved.

Of course, one of the greatest benefits of using condoms is disease prevention. When used correctly and consistently, condoms significantly reduce risks of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease (STD), especially those transmitted by genital secretions (HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis), and to a lesser degree, genital ulcer diseases (syphilis, herpes, and chancroid). According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, condom use may also reduce the risk for human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

For more information on birth control click on the Campus health website at www.health.arizona.edu



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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