

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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The withdrawal method, also known as “coitus interruptus” is documented as far back as back as the Biblical story of Onan.

Q How can a guy tell he is coming and is it possible to always withdraw in time with practice?

A. The withdrawal method may be the oldest form of birth control since it requires nothing more than interrupting intercourse to prevent sperm from entering the vagina. In fact, withdrawal is so basic, people often don't think of it as a real option. Like any form of birth control, using withdrawal to prevent pregnancy is only as effective as its practice, which requires men to “pull out” at some point prior to ejaculation.

Most men are able to anticipate ejaculation from the sensations they experience – the difficult part is pulling out in time in the heat of the moment. Although you and your partner are unlikely to be checking vital signs during sex, there are also well documented physiological changes that occur as part of the sexual response cycle, including increased heart rate, breathing and blood pressure, among others. With practice, these signs and sensations can be identified, allowing men to know when to pull out to reduce the chances of pregnancy.

While it is commonly written off as a “last resort” birth control strategy, withdrawal can

be quite effective if done correctly. This is a big “if” that has a lot to do with experience, self-control, body awareness and the degree of trust that you and your partner share. Studies show that for every 100 women whose partners use withdrawal, 4 will become pregnant each year if they **always** do it correctly. Among less than perfect users, 27 of 100 women will become pregnant each year if they **don't always** do it correctly.

After considering all the options, you might consider opting for birth control pills, condoms or another method based on your preferences. Of course, one of the great advantages of the withdrawal method is that it can be used in combination with any other form of birth control to further decrease the chances of pregnancy. Regular *SexTalk* readers will be reminded that withdrawal, like many contraceptive methods excluding condoms, offers no protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

For more information go to www.health.arizona.edu or check out Planned Parenthood's “My Method” at www.plannedparenthood.org.



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

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