

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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Q Will taking birth control pills affect my ability to get pregnant later on?

A. Taking oral contraceptives (OCs) can actually improve your future fertility. Birth control pills help lower the causes of infertility by:

- Reducing uterine fibroids
- Decreasing ectopic pregnancies
- Reducing ovarian cysts
- Lowering chances of ovarian and endometrial cancer
- Reducing endometriosis

If you are fertile and healthy (without congenital problems or medical conditions) prior to taking oral contraceptives, you should be fertile after you stop taking them. In addition, using OCs will not affect the age at which you enter menopause (when menstruation and fertility ceases).

Some women needlessly worry that it may take a long time to achieve a pregnancy after stopping birth control pills when, in fact, it is safe and possible to get pregnant immediately after stopping OCs. Some women coming off the pill experience a very slight delay in

becoming pregnant (about one month) compared to the time it would have taken if they had not taken OCs. Women are advised to take prenatal vitamins for at least 3 months before trying to conceive.

Keep in mind that if a woman takes the pill for 20 years, she will be less fertile because of her age, not the method of contraception she used for two decades. Fertility peaks in the late teens and declines as we age, particularly after age 40.

While there are genetic tests for predicting countless medical conditions and disorders you may be predisposed to later in life, there is no crystal ball to forecast whether you will be able to have a baby when you are older. The only true test for fertility is trying to get pregnant.

In summary, birth control pills are an excellent choice for women who plan to become pregnant in the future. To learn more, check out the Campus Health website at health.arizona.edu

Source: Contraceptive Technology, Hatcher et al., 2009.



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

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