

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

Campus Health now offers/inserts IUDs in the Women's Health Clinic. Call (520) 621-7617 for more info.

Q When is the safest time to have sex and avoid pregnancy?

A. Well... it depends. Women are usually least fertile in the few days before, during, and after the arrival of their period (menstrual bleeding). However, women's "clocks" can vary from month to month and an egg may be released at any point during the menstrual cycle. Because of this potential for menstrual cycle irregularity, fertility awareness – or "timing" sexual activity – is not considered a very effective form of birth control for most individuals.

Using effective birth control methods consistently and correctly will significantly reduce the chances of pregnancy. Highly effective options include intrauterine devices (IUDs like Skyla®, Paragard®, and Mirena®), implantable contraceptive rods (Implanon®), injectable contraceptives (Depo Provera®) and birth control pills. The traditional condom (which requires no prescription and has the added benefit of STD protection) is still an excellent method when used alone... and even better when combined with other methods.

In a hypothetical 28-day cycle, Day 1 is when menstrual bleeding begins. Halfway

through the menstrual cycle, on Day 14, the egg is released/ovulated. While the egg can only survive for about 24-36 hours, sperm can live inside a woman's body as long as five days. This makes fertilization possible for five days following intercourse. If a woman has a regular, 28-day menstrual cycle, it's easier to predict ovulation. However, many women have cycles that may range from 21 to 35 days, making it tricky, at best, to find a less fertile, safer, time for intercourse.

Campus Health offers a wide range of birth control options. Our Pharmacy sells Plan B (also known as emergency contraception or EC), which may be taken up to three days after sexual intercourse and is available without a prescription. Plan B is covered under the Affordable Care Act at no cost if you have health insurance, and can be obtained by anyone, regardless of age or gender. For more info, go to www.health.arizona.edu and search for "birth control" or call (520) 621-9202 to schedule an appointment.



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

SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., CHES, David Salafsky, MPH, and Carrie Hardesty, BS, CHES, health educators at The UA Campus Health Service.