



## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### Many birth control options available: What's best for your teen?

Your daughter may have talked to her pediatrician in private about using condoms to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Maybe she has heard that the pill can prevent pregnancy (and help clear up acne). But she may not know about an even more effective option to prevent pregnancy among adolescents. It's called long-acting birth control, but you may know of it as an implant or intrauterine device (IUD).



AAP News photo by Jeff Knox

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents to talk with their teens about abstinence, since not having sex is the best method to prevent pregnancy.

It also is important to talk about what teens should do to protect themselves if they are sexually active. Studies show that offering information and education about birth control options makes it less likely that adolescents will become pregnant.

Even though the teen birth rate has gone down by almost 30%, the United States still has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates. Each year, 3 million pregnancies — half of all pregnancies — are not planned. Birth control is a safe and effective way for adolescents to prevent unplanned pregnancies, according to the AAP.

Females under age 21 are two times more likely to get pregnant when using the pill, patch or intrauterine ring compared to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). Even though the pill, patch and ring are good birth control methods, teens often forget to take them or do not follow all of the instructions. Teens who use long-acting IUDs and implants have one less thing to remember to prevent pregnancy.

The IUD and the implant work for a long time but can be removed. They are available by prescription. Both release hormones or other active ingredients into the body to prevent pregnancy. The doctor inserts an implant (a small silicone capsule) into the arm under the skin, where it can stay for up to three years. An IUD is inserted by the doctor into the uterus. Some IUDs can stay in place for five years or more.

While these are effective methods to prevent pregnancy, condoms are still a must to protect teens from sexually transmitted infections, according to the AAP.

Teens should talk with their pediatrician to determine which long-acting contraceptive is best for them and go over any possible side effects.

— Trisha Koriath

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