

RULE #1....

USE PROTECTION



By: Sarah Efronson

Ladies, kiss your halter-tops, good-bye – life gets a bit more difficult when you're pregnant.

From dirty diapers to the weekends spent at home (not at the mall) are commonplace for teenage mothers. In a world where a sheath of latex and a pack of pills can prevent pregnancy with ease, it is unsettling to learn that approximately 40% of sexually active teens become pregnant by the time they turn twenty. What's the deal?

Some students think that safe sex is simply a matter of preparation. "I always use a condom," said Stephanie, a sophomore. "They're easy to get, and its better than finding out you're pregnant." Seeing the loss of her

"partying years," energy and youth as a major sacrifice, Stephanie says that it is better to protect yourself than to grow up in a matter of nine months.

Yet, many teens don't use contraceptives: approximately 900,000 girls under the age of 20 get pregnant every year, seventy-one percent of which were complete accidents, forcing girls usually preoccupied with prom and pimples to grow up fast.

Chris, recounting the story of a teenage mother named Danielle, says she was "like a 40 year old student struggling through high school."

Pharmaceutical companies have been sitting up and taking notice, releasing and heavily marketing several prescriptions for sexually active teens. Each method has its pros and cons, but it is unanimously agreed

that any measure taken to avoid pregnancy is better than nothing at all. Some teens who are not aware of the many contraceptives available

in a corner drugstore often turn to ineffective methods like guessing the periods during a women's menstrual cycle in which conception

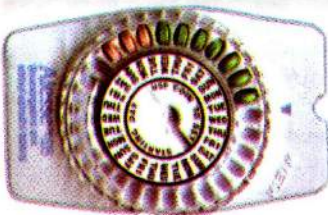
will least likely occur. Although this method is sometimes effective, it leads to even more reckless sex, resulting in more pregnancies.

The safest method... abstinence, is not for everyone, and other forms of birth control like vasectomies (for men) and tubal ligation (for women) are more specifically aimed at adults than teens, there are many preventative measures within reach of most, if not all teens.

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Methods:

Condom- There's no excuse not to use one of these – they're in every drugstore. Use the spermicidal kind for extra protection.



Birth Control Pill- There's a slew of these tiny pills on the market. Men, please don't try these; they're meant to "trick" a woman's body into thinking it's already pregnant, not kill sperm. Talk to your doctor about the brand and dosage of hormone

best for you. Some people have to try several types before finding the one that works for them. Ladies, you may gain weight, but better than being chock full of child.

Sub dermal Implants- These are matchstick-sized rubber rods filled with synthetic progestin that are under the skin of a woman's upper or lower arm. This baby lasts five years, releasing a steady flow of progestin into the blood stream. Plus, these can be removed at any time.

DMPA- (Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate)- Don't mind needled near your rear? This may be a suitable solution. DMPA is a treatment that involves a synthetic hormonal substance being injected into a woman's body every three months.

Emergency Contraceptive- This is the 911 of birth control methods. The good news: this method is not an abortifacient, and does *not* cause the abortion of a child. Must be taken within 72 hours after unprotected sex.

Female Condom- Made of a polyurethane sheath attached to a ring of latex that covers the entire vulva as well as vagina. Don't be fooled: this condom is not as effective as those a man wears, but works at protecting against both pregnancy and STDs. Nice form of independence.

Diaphragm- For all of your environmentalists out there: you wash and dry a diaphragm after use, instead of flushing it down the toilet. This is a circular, rubber cap-like shield that is put inside the vagina to cover the cervix before intercourse. It is

essential that diaphragm users consult a doctor to help with insertion and its comfort.

Vaginal Spermicides- In the mood for creams, gels and foams? Good, because instead of just bath time fun, these can actually prevent fertilization. Before you go pulling the Clairrol off of the shelf, look for spermicides containing chemical substance that *kills sperm*. Use with condoms, diaphragms, and cervical caps. And, kids: it can get messy, so try to keep it clean.

www.arhp.org/success/
Awesome site with a survey you can take, which then shows you the contraceptive methods that may be right for you.

