Teens’ rights to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services:

What are my rights to birth control, HIV and STD testing, and privacy (confidentiality)?

Young people’s rights to see a healthcare provider to get birth control, HIV and STD testing privately, without their parents knowing, are different from one state to another. However, in many communities there are clinics that receive government funding to provide confidential (private) reproductive health services. You can find one of these clinics by visiting www.advocatesforyouth.org and entering your zip code. Clinics that receive this funding are required by law to offer private, confidential services for teens, including:

- Safer sex and sexual and reproductive health counseling
- Prescriptions for birth control
- Administering Depo shots or inserting IUDs and implants
- Counseling about pregnancy options including prenatal care, adoption and abortion services

In most towns and cities, there are other types of clinics that also will provide these services confidentially to teens. If there is a local teen clinic, they often are able to see teens without a parent knowing – you can find a teen clinic by searching “adolescent clinic near me” in Google. Another place to look for clinical services is Planned Parenthood (visit www.plannedparenthood.org or call 1-800-230-7526 to find a clinic near you).

Many clinics offer free or low-cost services, and you can pay in cash. If you pay your bill using your family’s health insurance, your parents may receive a letter telling them about the services you received. If you’re unsure how to pay for your clinic visit and still keep it private, ask the clinic staff about their policies before you go.

In some states, the health care provider may be able to inform your parents of the services they have provided you, even without your permission. You can find out the laws in your state at www.advocatesforyouth.org/action-center/sex-in-the-states. You can also call the clinic before you go to ask how they handle confidential visits for youth.

Can I get emergency birth control (also called “EC” or the “morning-after pill”)?

You can take emergency birth control to prevent pregnancy after you’ve had unprotected or unwanted sex. There are several types of emergency birth control, and some are available without a prescription, even for teens. It is a good idea to get a dose of emergency birth control to have at home, so you already have it ready to use if you need it.

Plan B One-Step, as well as generic versions of this same medicine such as Take Action, Next Choice One dose, and My Way, are available at pharmacies to people of all ages, including teens. You do not need a prescription to get this kind of emergency birth control, but it is sometimes kept behind the counter, so you may have to ask the pharmacist or cashier to get it. It usually costs between $40 and $60. This medicine works up to 5 days after unprotected sex, but works better the sooner you take it! Although you do not need using your parents’ health insurance to get this kind of emergency birth control, if you do have one it may cost less (or be free) if you have a prescription from a healthcare provider AND you use your insurance to get it.

Another type of emergency birth control, ella, has a different ingredient than other emergency birth control pills, and may work a little better if you weigh more than 175 pounds. You do need a prescription to get ella, so you have to see a healthcare provider. Ella can be taken up to 5 days after unprotected sex.

Finally, having a copper IUD placed within 5 days of unprotected sex is an extremely effective way to prevent a pregnancy. What’s more, the copper IUD can stay in place for up to 10 years to provide ongoing birth control (although you can have it taken out sooner if you want). You have to go to a clinic to get a copper IUD – see above for information about finding a clinic near you that provides confidential care to teens and can place an IUD.

How can I get a pregnancy test?

You do not need a prescription from a healthcare provider to get a pregnancy test. You can buy a test at any drug store and at some grocery stores, and use it at home. A test costs between $8 and $20. You can also go to a clinic to get a pregnancy test (see above for information about finding a clinic near you).

Where can I get condoms?

You can get free condoms at many clinics and health centers. You can also buy them at drug stores, grocery stores, convenience stores, even some gas stations! Anyone can buy condoms – you don’t have to be a certain age. Condoms cost between $5 and $20 per box.

How can I talk about condoms and birth control with my partner?

It can be awkward or uncomfortable to talk about condoms and birth control with a partner – but it’s definitely worth it! Having unprotected sex puts both of you at risk of STIs and unintended pregnancy. So talking about protection before you have sex is an important way to take care of yourself and your partner. It shows that you respect your partner and yourself.

Spend some time thinking about what you want, so you can tell your partner clearly what you do and don’t want to do. You might even practice what you want to say, so that you can feel more confident when you actually have the conversation. Try to find a time to talk before you are in a sexual situation, so you don’t feel pressured to make a choice on the spot or before you’re ready.

Be clear with your partner about your reasons for wanting to use birth control and condoms. Some reasons for using birth control might be: that you’re not ready to become a parent right now, that you don’t want the stress of worrying that you might get pregnant, or that you have other priorities right now (like school or a job) that getting pregnant would make more difficult. The main reason for using condoms along with another birth control method is that condoms reduce the risk of STIs for both of you. Many STIs don’t have any symptoms, so you or your partner could spread the infection even if you feel healthy. Also, no birth control method is 100% effective, so using a condom in addition to another method is another level of protection, making your chance of getting pregnant very, very low.

You have the right to protect yourself and to make choices about sexual activity! If your partner doesn’t respond in a supportive way, take a step back to evaluate whether this is a good relationship for you and whether your partner respects and cares about you. No one should ever ask you to compromise your health and well-being!
**Preventing Pregnancy and STDs**

**USE ONE EVERY TIME**

- **Condom**
  - 98% EFFECTIVE against pregnancy, 99% EFFECTIVE against HIV and reduces the risk of many other STDs when used PERFECTLY, EVERY TIME.
  - **Internal condom**
    - 95% EFFECTIVE against pregnancy and may reduce the risk of STDs, including HIV when used PERFECTLY, EVERY TIME.

When not used PERFECTLY, the effectiveness of condoms at preventing pregnancy is only 82%.

Abstinence (not having sex) is 100% effective at preventing pregnancy and STDs as long as you remain 100% abstinent from sex.

**TWO METHODS ARE BETTER THAN ONE**

The safest and most error-proof plan is to use condoms to prevent STDs PLUS another method of birth control to prevent pregnancy.

**Condoms only work if you use them correctly, every time.**

**The safest and most error-proof plan is to use condoms to prevent STDs PLUS another method of birth control to prevent pregnancy.**

**Preventing Pregnancy**

**MORE EFFECTIVE**

Less than 1/100 women will get pregnant in one year using these methods.

- IUD (Intra-Uterine Device)
- Implant
- Depo; the Shot
- the Pill
- the Ring
- the Patch

**WHEN USED PERFECTLY LESS THAN 1/100 WOMEN WILL GET PREGNANT USING THESE METHODS IN ONE YEAR**

**LESS EFFECTIVE**

With typical use, less than 8/100 women will get pregnant in one year using these methods.

- Spermicide
- Withdrawal (pulling out)

**WHEN USED PERFECTLY 18/100 4/100 WOMEN WILL GET PREGNANT USING THESE METHODS IN ONE YEAR**

**LEAST EFFECTIVE**

85/100 women will get pregnant in one year using no method.

**When not used PERFECTLY, the effectiveness of condoms at preventing pregnancy is only 82%**

A healthcare provider can help you choose a method that fits your life.

Both you and your partner are responsible for protection.

All of these methods are safe for almost all women, including teens.