

Contraceptives for Teens

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As I personally know, teens experiment a lot with new things. Some try new sports, some may even join a club in school, but one thing that isn't talked about as much is their experimentation with sex. It may be a tough subject for some, but it is something that is very important to talk about. Most want the best for their children, whether that be in school or their classes, but when talking from a sexual perspective at such a young age, contraceptives may be the most important thing for their health. It's embarrassing to have to walk into a store and buy them, but they are very important to this generation of teenagers. As diseases and unwanted pregnancies occur in today's life, making contraceptives free would change the game tremendously. Some may say that teens don't need contraceptives because they won't experiment with sex, or they will not gain a disease, but the odds of this is much higher than originally thought. With teens being more prone to experimentation and being too young to have their own children, free contraception would help them to explore themselves without the fear of bearing a child as well. Therefore, contraceptives should be free to teens in the reproductive age group because they help prevent pregnancies at young ages, help with menstrual pains in young women, and help prevent sexual diseases in teens at such a young age.

Although contraceptives seem as a new and invasive idea currently, they can be dated back to as early as 1850 BC. As stated by Pandia Health (2023) in the article, Birth Control Throughout History, "The earliest forms of birth control were found in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia as far back as 1850 BC" (Pandia Health). During this period, birth control was "dangerous" and was often poisonous to most of the users, as they were using different herbs and spices. As time grew to our current era, birth control would revolutionize into being made from certain animal intestines to then being made into the famous pill. Before the pill was invented, though, the ideas of contraception in America were considered blasphemy as they were sought

out by the church. With time and patience, the pill was created afterwards. Pandia Health explained that, “In the 1950s, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Gregory Pincus, and John Rock created the first birth control pills. The pills did not become widely available until the 1960s” (Pandia Health). This pill would become one of the most used forms of contraception today in women, which has prevented millions of unwanted pregnancies for those that could not afford them. This has revolutionized women's health by building more opportunities for them and creating better health outcomes for their future. As time continued to move to the present day, birth control has continued to grow into a multitude of new options, such as condoms, IUDs, and the all famous pill.

With the all famous pill, there are often debates about whether it is useful, or if it is even worth using. As it has many positive side effects, I believe it to be very worthwhile. In the article, “Problems with contraception play big part in unplanned pregnancies, study says,” Janice Tanne (2008) stated, “Of the unplanned pregnancies, about 52% occur in women who were not using contraception” (Tanne). Although contraception is still provided and could potentially be available for any teen that needs it, that does not make it free. Without contraception available to everyone, there is a higher chance for unwanted pregnancies to occur. As teens are trying to find themselves more through sexual activity, it is important that contraceptives are readily available. With the idea of contraceptives being free for teens, they can effectively express themselves in that manner with a lower chance of pregnancy occurring. A solution would then be to make contraceptives free for all teens. In the article, “How Effective is the Pill?” Planned Parenthood (2023) gave evidence that, “If you use it perfectly, the pill is 99% effective. But people are not perfect and it is easy to forget or miss pills — so in reality the pill is about 93% effective” (Planned Parenthood). With the pill being free for teens, that would reduce the odds of unplanned pregnancies and make it a safer environment to happen.

Although the pill may be the most effective contraceptive used, there are still other devices that teens could use as contraception, such as ones that act as barriers. These barrier methods could include spermicide, diaphragm, condoms, and cervical caps. Even though they are not as effective as the pill, they could be a substitute for it as they may be less expensive for the government to cover. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists stated in the article, “Barrier Methods of Birth Control: Spermicide, Condom, Sponge, Diaphragm, and Cervical Cap,” that “out of 100 women per year, 18 to 28 women will become pregnant when using barrier methods” (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists). As stated before, this may not be as effective as the pill, but it gives more protection compared to not using contraception. If the price of oral contraception was an issue for government members as a reason not to make contraceptives free for teens, then they could use these barrier forms as a cheaper alternative.

Some say that contraceptives are only useful for preventing pregnancy. Although contraceptives are intended and most useful in preventing unwanted pregnancies, they also have benefits for the users themselves. It is known that women go through menstrual pains when they do not carry a child. This may cause women to go through pains for years as many are not ready to have children at the age of when they start getting them. For those that are teens, it may seem impossible to find relief, but contraceptives could help with those. Planned Parenthood (2023) released the article, “What are the benefits of the birth control pill?” which relayed that “the pill has many perks besides pregnancy prevention. Both combination and progestin-only pills reduce menstrual cramps, lighten periods, and lower your risk of ectopic pregnancy” (Planned Parenthood). This shows that the pill has more benefits than may be originally perceived. The main purpose of the pill is to prevent pregnancies, but this adds a huge extra value to it. As it is

with many items, cost does play an important role in who can and cannot use birth control. It should be free so that any teen who takes it can be relieved instead of a smaller few.

Contraceptives not only help with women's menstrual pains, but also help in other aspects of their lives. As stated before, the pill's main purpose is to prevent pregnancies, but its contents are also useful in helping to prevent or reduce menstrual pains in women. These benefits were stated in Planned Parenthood's (2023) article, "What Are the Benefits of the Birth Control Pill," when they were listed as, "The combination pill can also help prevent or lessen: acne, bone thinning, cysts in your breasts and ovaries, endometrial and ovarian cancers, serious infections in your ovaries, fallopian tubes and uterus, iron deficiency (anemia), and PMS (premenstrual syndrome)" (Planned Parenthood). Even though some say contraceptives, especially the pill, are horrible for young children, this just shows that birth control doesn't have to be used only for preventing pregnancies. Birth control should be made free for all teens because it has benefits, both sexually and non-sexually. If it was made free, millions of teens around the world would benefit from it as it makes them more active (withstanding pain) and keeps them healthy from internal diseases.

In a world where most things are overlooked, the number of diseases in men is something that is majorly overseen. Even though some say that they don't need contraceptives, it would still be a good idea as sexually transmitted diseases are incredibly deadly to men. Although women have oral contraceptives for their own purposes, men also have their own purposed contraceptives. Barrier protections are the best types of contraceptives for men as they try to avoid any unwanted diseases. In the article, "Contraception," by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023), they state, "Consistent and correct use of the male latex condom reduces the risk for HIV infection and other STDs, including chlamydial infection, gonococcal infection, and trichomoniasis" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). As most of the diseases that

relate to sexual activity is transmitted through physical touch, these barrier contraceptives, for men especially, are very important to teens health. At such a young age, sexual diseases could ruin a teen's health for a long time, causing them to be weaker and less concentrated in their work or studies. An interesting fact from J Flowers Health in the article, "Most Common STDs in Teens," shows that "50% of new STDs each year are diagnosed in individuals aged 15 to 24 years old. The average age to begin having sex is 17 years old, which is part of the reason why that age group has such high STD rates" (J Flowers Health). With this terrifying statistic, this just proves that contraceptives are just as important now than ever. With new variants of sexual disease, contraceptives may be seen as a must when sexually active but not wanting the conception of a baby. The only hurdle from teens receiving contraception is cost. The National Women's Health Network (2017) described this cost in their article, "How Much Do Different Kinds of Birth Control Cost Without Insurance?" when they said, "While the cost of birth control pills is around \$20 to \$50 per individual pack, monthly purchases added up to a yearly sum of anywhere from \$240 to \$600" (National Women's Health Network). As most teens are unemployed, this cost can seem almost impossible for them, which could lead to unprotected experimentation. Some may not be able to afford it, which could be solved by making it free for all teens. As they are in their years of experimentation, and the ideas of sex being new to them, contraception being free for them would be a huge implementation into the system. This would not only help prevent unwanted pregnancies, but also prevent unwanted diseases as well.

Even when most say that contraceptives should be for assistance only supporters only, the present situations of teens show that they may actually be the most needed age group for contraceptives. Teens should have free usage of contraceptives to prevent pregnancies, help women with menstrual pains, and prevent sexual diseases at such a young age. Even though they should be made free, I do understand the obstacles that the government would have to break

through in order to make this a reality. Brookings described this cost in the article, “Increasing financial access to contraception for low-income Americans,” they expanded on this idea when they said, “Increase congressional appropriations for the Title X program to support the elimination of cost-sharing. Eliminating Title X cost-sharing for contraception would cost the federal government \$178 million per year” (Brookings). Although this is a hard goal to accomplish, the world as a whole would benefit from this idea as it has so many benefits. With contraceptives being free, teens would have an outlet to go to if they needed help with sexual activity. Since teens are experimenting with these sorts of acts, it could be vital for this generation to make this change sooner rather than later. The future depends on this generation for answers and for setting them up for success. With this in effect, the future may choose to experiment as well, so, to make the future safer and better, contraceptives should be free for all teens with no exceptions.

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Authors Note:

I learned many new ideas through my mistakes in this essay. As I went through the old draft, I noticed that my citations were good, but could be better, so I decided to change them a little bit by including the date of publication. I also ran into many problems with my wordiness, which caused some setbacks in the process of editing the final draft but made me learn so much more about myself. It felt like my writing in general improved while writing this essay, as well as my ability to critically read certain passages for information that I may need.