



## BIRTH CONTROL MYTHS



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Whether you are just thinking about it or have already become sexually active, being interested in sex is a natural part of maturing. Once the decision has been made about engaging in this activity, then this behavior does present some risks. Two major unwanted events can result from sexual activities: a pregnancy, if it is not the right time for you and sexually transmitted diseases. Fortunately, risks can be reduced if both sexual partners are well informed. Being informed accurately is necessary in order to make healthy decisions.

Talking it over and getting good information is the first step in answering the question, “Am I ready for sex?” The first fact that you need to know is that abstinence (no sex) is the only 100% effective method of not becoming pregnant or contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). If you are not ready for everything that sex means, this is the method for you. You can be close - safely - without going all the way.

Once the decision has been made to enter into this next step of the relationship both partners should be sure that the information they have to protect themselves is accurate. There are a lot of myths. It is important to take the time to educate yourselves first on the facts vs the myths.

What are some birth control myths, you ask? These will definitely not prevent pregnancy:

- **Jumping up and down after intercourse.**
- **Hope.**
- **Going to the washroom immediately after intercourse.**
- **Douching (type of cleaning procedure) the vagina after intercourse.**

So, if any of these myths are similar to what your friends say is paranoia, then they better take a closer look. Although these methods may appear to make sense, they are myths with no factual data to substantiate any effectiveness.

There are also some other birth control methods that are not reliable. In fact, some are rated “R” for **RISKY**. What are these you ask?

- **BREAST-FEEDING-** This method may protect against pregnancy by delaying the return

of fertility (when an egg is being released) after childbirth. It is, however, possible for a woman to become pregnant again before her periods resume.

- **WITHDRAWAL** (Coitus Interruptus) - requires that the man remove his penis from his partner's vagina before he ejaculates. Ejaculation must occur completely away from the genital area of the woman to prevent sperm from entering the vagina. Withdrawal is not considered reliable for two reasons:
  - ▶ It requires considerable self-control on the part of the man, as it is not always possible for a man to withdraw in time.
  - ▶ There is a possibility of this sperm being present, even before ejaculation.

This method is very risky. If you don't want a baby, don't rely on this method.

- **SAFE DAYS**- Also too risky. Very complicated. It's good to understand what might be your fertile days ( an egg being released) when you want to get pregnant. It is not a reliable method if you don't want a baby. No protection against STI's.
- **TEMPERATURE METHOD**- The temperature method involves taking your body temperature every morning when you wake up and recording it on a chart to approximately determine the time of ovulation to help identify which days are safe and which days are not. This method is not recommended for teens because it requires training, effort and a lot of discipline because sex is limited to about 10 days per month. Second, it requires a regular menstrual cycle and a regular lifestyle, which is rarely the case with teens.

**DURING MENSTRUATION (during your period)**- This is not always a safe time. Although this is a rare occurrence, ovulation could still occur in some women during this time.

In summary, it is important to educate yourself and protect yourself. Remember, the first and most important step is knowing what you want to get out of the relationship.

If you are sexually active or about to be, get the **facts on birth control** in order to make informed decisions. See a Doctor, contact the Sexual Health Clinic in Moncton at 856-3310, visit the Nurse/Educator at the Student Health Centre by calling 364-2163, or talk to an adult you trust.

**Don't rely on myths.**

#### **Did you know?**

- You can get pregnant the first time.
- Besides abstinence, only condoms protect against STI's.
- Whenever body fluids of two people come in contact there is always a chance of getting a STI or becoming pregnant.
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1. Planned Parenthood Manitoba, "Are you asking...Am I Ready for Sex?", (1995).
2. Wyeth, "Birth Control", (1985).
3. Berlex Canada., Inc., published as part of Berlex Canada's Start Smart sex education program: "A guide to birth control....", (1998).