

Many Websites Fail to Dispel Myths about IUDs, Emergency Contraception, Birth Control, and Proper Timing of Pap Smears

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- Health Providers need to **actively debunk six myths** perpetuated online and provide correct information to patients.
- **The correct information** to counter the six myths is as follows:
 1. Emergency Contraception (EC) availability
 - For 18+, EC is OTC; for minors, EC is available by prescription or directly from authorized pharmacists in 9 states (AK, CA, HI, ME, MA, NH, NM, VT, WA).
 2. EC does not cause an abortion and is therefore not the same as RU-486.
 3. IUDs are safe for use by Adolescents, including the nulliparous and serially monogamous.^{2,3}
 4. A review of 47 randomized control trials was unable to show combined hormonal contraceptives cause weight gain.⁴
 5. Pap Smears Guidelines: 3 years after coitarche or at age 21¹
 6. Herpes can be transmitted by kissing an infected individual.

- Websites were reviewed for 26 items of sexual health information, including the following:

Criteria	% Correct	% Incorrect	% Missing
EC is 75-89% effective	73	3	24
EC is less effective than routine hormonal options and should therefore not be used as a substitute.	73	--	27
Depo-Provera can cause short term fertility loss	59	--	41
STDs are transmitted through oral, anal, and vaginal sex	97	--	3
Combined OCPs decreases the risk of endometrial and ovarian cancer.	64	--	36
The calendar/ rhythm method is not very effective at preventing pregnancy.	95	5	--
Withdrawal is not very effective at preventing pregnancy	100	--	--
Hormonal Birth Control does not protect against STDs	100	--	--
Most STDs are asymptomatic	100	--	--
Burning with urination & discharge are common signs of STDs	100	--	--

** Percentages were adjusted to exclude websites not containing information about the specific topic. For example, websites containing information only about EC were not excluded from percentage calculations for STD topics.

- Suggested Websites

Go Ask Alice: <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/>

Center for Young Women's Health: <http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/>

TeensHealth: <http://kidshealth.org/teen/>

Teen Wire: <http://www.teenwire.com/>

- Selected References:

1. ACOG. Cervical cancer screening in adolescents. Committee Opinion No. 300. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. Oct 2004;104:885-9.
2. ACOG. Intrauterine Devices and Adolescents. Committee Opinion No. 392. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. Dec 2007. 110 (6): 1493-95
3. Gold, MA & Johnson, LM. "Intrauterine Devices and Adolescents (Review)." *Current Opinions in Obstetrics & Gynecology*. 2008; 20(5):464-9
4. Gallo, MF, et al. Combination contraceptives: effects on weight (Review). *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*. Aug 2008; 20(4):383-9

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