

On-demand contraception: attitudes and expectations of female graduate students

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Background/Synopsis

Women have expressed interest in a method of hormonal “on-demand” (OD) contraception that could be taken before or immediately after sex rather than a continuous daily method like OCPs.¹⁻² Women cite increased freedom, fear of using continuous hormones for a long time, convenience, ease of remembering, and discretion as reasons for preferring OD.² Limited research on consumer preferences for OD has been conducted principally outside the United States or in groups with high rates of unprotected intercourse.

Objective/Purpose

Identify attitudes towards on-demand contraception in a group of educated women highly motivated to avoid pregnancy.

Methods

We designed and administered a 15-question survey assessing age, relationship status, pregnancy intention, coital frequency, past experiences with contraceptive methods, and current contraceptive preferences to female graduate students at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Results

We received 184 responses out of 811 queries. Eighty-two percent were in an ongoing relationship. Fifty percent were 25-29, 80% had never been pregnant, and 77% wished to avoid pregnancy in the next 1-2 years. When asked regarding an on-demand method, 57% preferred an oral pill, 21% a male/female condom, and 6% withdrawal. 53% reported decreased pleasure during intercourse with use of a male/female condom. The coital frequency was greater than 3 times per week in 17%, 1-3 times per week in 47%, 1-3 times per month in 25%, and 1-3 times per year in 11% of respondents.

Conclusion

Our population of highly motivated, educated women planned to avoid pregnancy for 2 years. They expressed a high level of interest in oral OD contraception. Decreased pleasure with male or female condoms is a significant obstacle to their use as OD contraception. The incidence of infrequent intercourse with 36% reporting fewer than one coital act/week was an unexpected finding. Women with infrequent intercourse would be ideal candidates for an on-demand method that does not impair sexual pleasure.

Citations:

1. Halpern V, Raymond EG, Lopez LM. Repeated use of pre-and post- coital hormonal contraception for prevention of pregnancy. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2010:1
2. Raymond EG, Schochet T, Drake JK, Westley E. What some women want? On-demand oral contraception. *Contraception* 2014;90:105-110.