



TALKING ABOUT FREEDOM OF CHOICE: 10 Important Facts About Contraception

- 1 Contraception is basic health care for women.**
The average woman will spend five years pregnant or trying to get pregnant and nearly three decades trying to avoid pregnancy.¹ Without contraception, a woman between the ages of 20 and 44 could give birth approximately 12 times.²
- 2 Family planning is a sensible investment.**
Family-planning services provide millions of women access to reproductive health care they otherwise would not be able to afford. In addition, for every \$1 the government spends on contraceptive services, taxpayers save approximately \$3 that otherwise would have been spent on pregnancy-related and other care through Medicaid.³
- 3 Responsible sex education does not encourage teens to have sex.**
Young people who receive instruction that includes both abstinence and contraception/STD prevention wait longer to start having sex, have fewer partners, and use contraception more often than their peers.⁴
- 4 Right-wing politicians have responded to the U.S. teen-pregnancy epidemic with ideology, not science.**
Instead of funding honest, realistic sex-education programs, which are proven effective, they spend tax dollars on unproven, risky “abstinence-only” programs. By law, these curricula censor any positive discussion of contraception’s benefits, and even worse, many contain medically inaccurate information about vital health topics like HIV and AIDS.
- 5 Medical experts believe that teens should be able to obtain contraceptives confidentially.**
The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Public Health Association support a minor’s right to obtain contraceptives confidentially, without government-mandated involvement of parents.⁵
- 6 More than 40 million women of reproductive age are sexually active and do not want to become pregnant, but could if they do not have access to reliable contraception.**⁶
A growing movement of rogue pharmacists is refusing to fill women’s legally prescribed birth-control prescriptions. Any delay caused by a pharmacist refusal can increase a woman’s risk of unintended pregnancy or exacerbate a medical condition for which she may be using the contraceptives.⁷
- 7 Nearly eight in 10 U.S. voters support laws requiring health plans to cover contraceptives.**⁸
However, 25 states have yet to pass laws ensuring equitable contraceptive coverage for women.⁹
- 8 Emergency contraception (EC) — also known as the “morning-after” pill or “Plan B” — is a concentrated dosage of ordinary birth-control pills that can dramatically reduce a woman’s chance of becoming pregnant if taken soon after sex.**¹⁰
EC does not cause abortion; rather, it inhibits ovulation, fertilization, or implantation before a pregnancy occurs. EC should not be confused with mifepristone (also known as RU 486), an early-abortion option. EC accounted for up to a 43% decrease in abortions between 1994 and 2000,¹¹ yet the Bush administration continues to ignore the advice of FDA scientists to make EC available over the counter.
- 9 Almost half of all pregnancies in the United States each year are unintended.**¹³
Contraceptives are the most effective way to prevent unintended pregnancies.
- 10 FDA-approved contraceptives prevent pregnancy; they do not cause abortion.**
Pregnancy begins with the implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterus. All FDA-approved methods of contraception, including birth-control pills, injectable and implantable methods, barrier methods, IUDs and emergency contraception, work before a pregnancy begins — usually by preventing fertilization or ovulation.¹⁴

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TALKING ABOUT FREEDOM OF CHOICE: 10 Important Facts About Abortion

- 1 The best way to reduce the need for abortion is to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies.**
Almost half (49%) of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended, and nearly half of these result in abortion.¹ Better access to birth control, including the “morning-after” pill, honest, age-appropriate sex education, and family-planning services could cut the number of unintended pregnancies and abortions dramatically.
- 2 Women’s freedom to choose is at risk of being restricted by state legislatures and governors all over the country.²**
If the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*, 19 states could ban abortion.³ In those states, the legislature and governor are currently anti-choice. In contrast, in only four states are the legislature and governor currently solidly pro-choice.
- 3 *Roe v. Wade* does not give women an “unlimited” right to abortion.**
Roe was a balanced decision, taking into account both a woman’s right to make decisions about her own body and future and the state’s interest in protecting potential life. In *Roe*, the Supreme Court legalized abortion until viability, the point at which the fetus is capable of surviving outside the woman’s body. After viability, *Roe* allows states to ban abortion except when necessary to protect the woman’s life or health.⁴
- 4 Legal abortion is a very safe procedure.**
The risk of complication is minimal — less than 1% of women experience a major complication.⁵ Legal abortion is safer than a tonsillectomy, an appendectomy, or a shot of penicillin.⁶
- 5 Nearly nine in 10 abortions take place early in pregnancy.**
Eighty-eight percent of abortions are provided during the first trimester of pregnancy and less than 2% are provided after 21 weeks.⁷
- 6 Thirty-five percent of women will have an abortion by the time they are 45 years old.⁸**
Women of various ages, ethnicities, religious backgrounds, and income levels choose abortion, one of the most common surgical procedures.
- 7 Access to abortion is limited.**
Eighty-seven percent of all U.S. counties have no abortion provider.⁹
- 8 Many religions support a woman’s right to choose.**
Religions in support of a woman’s right to choose include the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, the Unitarian Universalist Association, Conservative Judaism, and Reform Judaism.¹⁰ Only 23% of U.S. Catholics believe that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances.¹¹
- 9 There is no link between abortion and breast cancer.**
Anti-choice groups incorrectly claim there is a link between abortion and breast cancer. The issue has been studied exhaustively and the vast bulk of evidence from unbiased sources concludes there is no such link. Most recently, a 2004 study published in *The Lancet* — a widely respected medical journal — analyzed data from more than 50 other studies and concluded that women do not have an increased risk of breast cancer if they obtain an abortion.¹²
- 10 In states without parental-involvement laws, 61% of parents know of their daughter’s decision to terminate a pregnancy.¹³**
Young people should be encouraged to consult their parents about important medical issues — and thankfully, many do. But in cases where it just isn’t possible — when incest or abuse is an issue, for instance — a one-size-fits-all law won’t help teens; instead, it could put them in danger.

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