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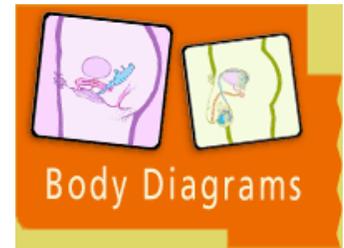
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Taking Control of Birth Control

Heather Boerner, 03.04.08

Talking to your health care provider about the big BC — birth control — can be so mortifying you want to crawl right out of your skin. But it can also be quick and painless. And, most importantly, taking to your provider about contraception can prevent a life-altering unintended pregnancy.

Embarrassment Can Cause Pregnancy

A recent study in *Pediatric Adolescent Gynecology* asked teen moms whether they used birth control before they got pregnant. Their answers may — or may not — surprise you: Most reported that they were too embarrassed to talk about contraception with almost anyone, including their partner, their parents, and their health care providers.

Should you keep mum on birth control with your doctor? Research says no.

Consider these odds:

- Using birth control sometimes but not always makes you nearly three times as likely to become pregnant as women who always take it.
- Not using birth control at all makes you more than 11 times more likely to become pregnant than women who use it.

Stay Healthy

"The bottom line is that a moment's embarrassment beats the heck out of getting pregnant at 16," says Nancy Brown, senior research associate at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation and author of the [Teen Health 411 Blog](#).

If you're embarrassed about asking the doctor you've gone to since you were seven about birth control, here are Brown's tips to ease the tension:

- Be anonymous.** Worried your doctor will tell your mom? Call your provider's office and see if they're comfortable talking with you about contraception. "You don't need to say who you are," Brown says. "Just say, 'I'm a patient of so-and-so and I'm considering being sexually active. I'd like to come in and talk about birth control without telling my parents.'"
- Check confidentiality.** This means more than just not telling your parents: It means making sure your parents don't find out in other ways. Does your provider's office call your house to remind you of an appointment? If so, ask them to call your cell phone instead. Also check on insurance and billing procedures.
- Go Somewhere Else** If your family doctor can't guarantee confidentiality, find another provider. Check out a women's health center, a county health clinic, or visit a Planned Parenthood. You can call 1-800-230-PLAN to

related links

- [Birth Control Choices for Teens](#)
- [Acing Your Gynecological Exam](#)
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"Be honest with health care providers so they can get an accurate picture of your health and needs."

find the health center nearest you. First, ask if your visit can be confidential, then make an appointment.

- **Buddy up.**
Now that you've checked confidentiality and made an appointment, don't go it alone. Ask a friend to come with you — maybe she wants to get info on birth control, too. And remember, says Brown, "You don't have to have an exam. It can be an informational meeting."
- **Write it down.**
Scared to say the words "birth control" to your provider? You don't have to. Instead, write a note and hand it over. Or write your question on an IM screen of your cell phone and show it to your doctor.
- **Be honest.**
Be honest with health care providers so they can get an accurate picture of your health and needs. It can help them determine if it's a good idea to test for sexually transmitted infections, prescribe birth control, or offer counseling for problematic sexual relationships.

Make the Call

To find about the Planned Parenthood health center nearest you, call 1-800-230-PLAN or find us [online](#).

Planned Parenthood health centers strive to provide services that are confidential and affordable, especially for teens. But for one reason or another, health care providers in certain locations may not be able to guarantee complete confidentiality.

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