

WOMEN'S CONTRACEPTIVE PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES DON'T MATCH UP

More than three quarters of current hormonal contraceptive users have concerns about their current birth control method

KENILWORTH, N.J., October 16, 2008 -- Women's feelings and behaviors concerning contraception are conflicted, yet many don't seek out methods that could better satisfy their needs, according to a new survey conducted on behalf of Schering-Plough by Harris Interactive®. In the survey, "Contraceptive Habits," a small percentage of women (six percent) said they worry most about the possibility of getting pregnant when it comes to sex, yet 46 percent of women using birth control say they often feel relieved to get their periods if they've been sexually active. One in five women (21 percent) who currently use, or have previously used, hormonal contraceptives say they have difficulty remembering to use their birth control sometimes. Yet 75 percent of these same women say they never sacrifice spontaneity due to their birth control method.

"With more than half of all unintended pregnancies in the United States occurring among couples who used some type of birth control, it's very troubling that the majority of women are not confident in their contraceptive methods," said Mary Jane Minkin, M.D., clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Yale University School of Medicine. "It only takes one birth control slip up to get pregnant, and if women are not feeling confident in their current method, they should express their concerns with their healthcare providers to find an option that suits them better."

Findings from the survey include:

- Seventy-nine percent of current hormonal contraceptive users have concerns about their current birth control method. Despite these concerns, 39 percent have stayed with their chosen method for five or more years.

- Sixty-two percent of women who currently use a hormonal contraceptive report that having sex increases stress levels when they've not used their birth control correctly. Yet, when it comes to sex, women using birth control say they worry more about their own or their partner's satisfaction (29 percent) and body image (24 percent) than pregnancy (10 percent) or contracting a sexually-transmitted disease (8 percent).
- Twenty-three percent of 18 to 34-year-old women say daily birth control would be most convenient for them, yet 46 percent of women in the same age group who currently use a hormonal contraceptive have more difficulty remembering to use their current method correctly when their daily routine is interrupted.
- Of women aged 18 to 34 who currently use birth control, 80 percent use contraception primarily to prevent pregnancy. However, 93 percent of women aged 18 to 34 (both on and off birth control) do not know that half of unintended pregnancies in the United States occur with couples that used some method of birth control.

Another revelation highlighted in the survey data is the degree to which women seek input from people in their lives—from physicians to their partners, friends and family—when making decisions about birth control. Sixty-two percent of women indicated they discuss birth control with a potential partner. Women of all ages who currently use, or have previously used hormonal contraceptives, reported that a physician's recommendation was among the top five attributes that are most important to them in choosing a birth control method.

"The findings from this survey signal that while we may be living at a time when women have many contraceptive options and are empowered to make their own informed decisions, many are either dissatisfied with or have concerns about their method," says Dr. Minkin. "Overall, this is a wake-up call for women to evaluate how happy they really are with their current method and recognize that they don't have to settle for the status quo when it comes to birth control options."

For complete survey results, visit www.contraceptivehabits.com.

About the Survey

Harris Interactive, on behalf of Schering-Plough, conducted an online survey within the U.S. among 1,302 women ages 18 and over between July 7 and July 9, 2008, (percentages for some questions are based on a subset of respondents, based on their responses to certain

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questions). Respondents for the survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. adult female population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Mary Jane Minkin, M.D.

Mary Jane Minkin, M.D., is a clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Yale University School of Medicine and has a private practice in New Haven, Connecticut. Dr. Minkin is co-author, with Carol Wright, of “A Woman's Guide to Menopause and Perimenopause” and “The Yale Guide to Women's Reproductive Health.” Dr. Minkin is lead author and co-author of articles in numerous peer-reviewed journals, and she also advises and gives lectures to the menopause support group PRIME PLUS/Red Hot Mamas.

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