

New contraceptive methods change birth control patterns

October 19 2012, by Sharon Jayson

The birth control pill and sterilization are still the most common forms of contraception, but new federal data released Thursday show that long-acting methods are gaining ground while condom use for birth control is declining.

The report from the National Center for Health Statistics is based on data from a national sample of 12,279 [women ages](#) 15-44 in 2006-2010 compared with a sample of 10,847 women those ages in 1995. Findings show that sterilization and the pill were used by either 27 percent or 28 percent of women in both sets of data, (28 percent in 1995 and 27 percent in 2006-10 for [sterilization](#) and 27 percent in 1995 and 28 percent in 2006-10 for the pill), but [condoms](#) as the most effective method of [birth control](#) declined from 20 percent to 16 percent.

That decline was offset by a 75 percent increase in the use of other hormonal methods such as the patch or ring (from 4 percent to 7 percent) and a sevenfold increase (0.8 percent to 5.6 percent) in the [intrauterine device](#) (IUD). Such methods are among those deemed "long-acting" since they do not require daily or weekly attention.

"There is some shift toward more effective [contraception](#). The shift is also toward methods that require less user intervention," says Lawrence Finer, director of domestic research at the New York City non-profit Guttmacher Institute, which studies [sexual and reproductive health](#).

Finer is lead author of research published this month in the journal

[Fertility and Sterility](#), which focused on long-acting contraception. The study found the proportion of women using such methods "increased significantly" since 2002 and occurred among women in almost every age, race, education and income group.

Experts say these other hormonal methods and the long-acting methods are becoming more popular because they are reliable and convenient. Many were not available during the first data collection. In addition, [implants](#) can last three years and some IUDs don't need replacing for five or 10 years.

However, the report notes that contraceptive method use varies depending on insurance coverage and income.

"Many of the newer methods require physician visits to receive either the method itself like the IUD or a prescription," says Jo Jones, the report's lead author.

But that's not the only obstacle to greater growth of these newer methods, suggests nurse practitioner Linda Dominguez, of Albuquerque.

"There's a whole generation of physician providers who were not trained in the use of IUDs and implants," says Dominguez, board chairwoman of the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, which is providing such training.

Among other findings:

-62 percent of women ages 15-44 use contraception; 38 percent do not (includes those who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant; those who haven't ever had sexual intercourse or had sex in the past three months of the survey).

-Of teens ages 15-19, about 31 percent were using contraception; 59 percent either had never had intercourse or had not had intercourse in the prior three months.

-More white women (66 percent) were using contraception compared with Hispanic (60 percent) or black (54 percent) women.

-The use of other hormonal contraceptive methods increased in all age groups, but was greater among women under age 30.

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