

Interested in birth control but not sure
which one is right for you?

Welcome to SBH Bronx Health Talk produced
by SBH Health System and broadcast from
the beautiful studios at St. Barnabas
Hospital in the Bronx. I'm Faith Daniel.

Birth control medications and devices
are among the safest medications on the
market and an empowering way to take
control of your reproductive health.

There are many different methods to
choose from, the ring the patch, the pill,
the IUD and more. Each is unique in its
own way. If you're a teen, a visit
with a adolescent medicine doctor can
help determine which is the safest most
convenient and best for you. Here with me
today is Dr. Kanani Titchen, Director of
Adolescent Health Services at SBH.

Welcome.

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

So let's just jump right into it and

could you please go over the options that we offer at the hospital.

Yes, there are numerous options at the hospital for birth control and contraception. The most popular tends to be the the implant, the hormonal implant which is inserted under the skin in the patient's upper arm. Another method that's long-acting similar to the implant is the hormonal IUD that's inserted into the uterus. Another option similar to the hormonal IUD is the non hormonal or copper IUD also inserted into the uterus each of these options are referred to as long acting reversible contraception or LARC and they last anywhere from three to ten years depending on which method you choose there are other options as well that are shorter term such as the birth control pill that you take daily as well as the patch, the ring, and there's also a progesterone only method called the depo-provera shot that's given every three months so we have a variety of options and each of them have their own

pluses and minuses and really depend on what the teenager is looking for in terms of lifestyle and side-effect profile.

Could you go over briefly maybe like the pros and cons of like the most popular ones that you administer?

Sure, the most popular methods again for teenagers tend to be the long-acting or reversible contraceptives simply because you don't have to remember to do anything so instead of having to remember to take a pill every night and worrying that if you don't take the pill at exactly the right time you could possibly become pregnant or bleed. The long-acting reversible contraception or the hormonal implant or the IUD once they're in they really do the job for you. They are progesterone method only so there's no estrogen in them which is good for some teenagers who maybe can't take estrogen for various reasons. They're popular because again you don't

have to remember to do anything and they have a very very good protection against pregnancy so the implant again is higher than 99% effective against pregnancy and the hormonal IUDs also 99.8% effective against pregnancy.

and is birth control covered by insurance?

Birth control is covered by insurance. The coverage will vary depending on the insurance that the patient has but it is mandated that birth control be covered by every insurance, some birth control option.

and if I'm a teen can I come in on my own together? or do I have to have a parent with me a legal guardian?

That's a great question, so teenagers in New York State are lucky because they can access adolescent reproductive healthcare on their own so anybody who is under the age of 18 is protected by the state in terms of privacy they can make an appointment with an adolescent health

practitioner and come in and see the doctor on their own for reproductive health care.

Will my parent find out or legal guardian find out?

Another great question. If the patient has Medicaid the parents likely will not find out unless the teenager wants to disclose to the parents and that's actually something that I do as a physician as I talk with the teenagers my goal is not to keep secrets from parents my goal is to help my patients and part of helping my patients is to foster a productive relationship between my patients and their parents so I work with teenagers to help them disclose to their parents their sexual activity or the you know just their maturing and growing up in the timeframe that the patients want to disclose that but if they do not give me permission than I am bound by state law to keep those visits private and to keep that that patient's information private as well.

So even if I'm say 15 and my parent has a suspicion that I am on birth control and they call the doctor's office that information will never be disclosed?

That's correct a 15 year old is protected by New York state law and that is private information that pertains to that patient again I would talk with the fifteen-year-old and ask them why they're keeping this from their parents and encourage them to probably start that conversation and again I facilitate that conversation in the office quite frequently.

and so if I'm a teenager and I come into your office could you walk me through what the process is like so if I'm like hey I want to start birth control I'm not really sure what would you say or how would that go?

Sure, so first of all even in just planning that

appointment confidentiality is key so the the teenager could call our assistant her name is Tracy at seven one eight nine six zero three eight five four and schedule a confidential adolescent visit with me, Dr. Titchen. The patient would then come to that visit on his or her own at the scheduled time check in at the front desk and the front desk would issue them into the room or the nurse would issue them into the room and we'd do some simple vital signs and other standard testing when I meet with the patient I discuss with them what their goals are so is the patient coming in for contraceptive care because she's having sex or is she there because she has really terrible periods and a lot of bleeding and so she's looking for a contraceptive method not for sex but for controlling her periods and making them less painful and less heavy. So we discussed the goals I also discussed goals with the patient about what they think they can do, so is this a patient who wants to take a pill every

night and wants to be able to stop and start as they wish of course in conjunction with their doctor, or is this a patient who's really busy has a very busy lifestyle maybe is in college or is heading off to college and wants a longer acting method and really doesn't want to have to think about whether they're taking the pill or not and is looking for something long-term so we discussed the goals for each particular patient and what and then we talk about what the best method might be for them.

and are there any specific things that someone should consider like I know you mentioned lifestyle that's like a big thing like if you're like a super busy person that the pill may not be the best thing for you, you know, if you're have some trouble remembering things. Are there any other things that people should consider or like health specific things they should consider?

Absolutely, so as I mentioned we have a number of progesterone only forms and those are the long-acting reversible contraceptives that I mentioned, the hormonal implant and the IUD and also the depo-provera shot. If a patient has for instance a history of migraines with something called aura where they have visual changes each time they have a diagnosed migraine headache, if they have a history of seizures, if they have a history in the family of blood clots, for instance stroke or venous thromboembolism or or a pulmonary embolism or if the patient has a history of seizures then we'll have to be really careful and judicious about prescribing them estrogen so a progesterone only form might actually be better for patients like that there are all sorts of reasons why patients can or cannot take estrogens and so we consider those very carefully when we bring them into the clinic and we ask a lot of questions about the health issues in the family

the health issues for the patient and then like you said lifestyle so can I remember to take a bill I don't know can I remember to come in every three months and get a shot not so much. A lot of patients ask me about weight gain because they're very concerned that birth control is going to increase weight gain, that is simply not the case there are no studies that bear that out the pill is very safe just to take without any weight gain. The one method that does cause weight gain has been shown over and over again is the shot, the depo-provera shot i'm administered every three months but other methods, no weight gain.

So that makes me think about the myths that are around birth control especially like with gaining weight cuz I've even heard that - like oh like you don't want to do that because you're gonna gain weight, like are you willing to risk that kind of thing and I was always thinking like gain weight or a baby.

Well if you're pregnant you gain a lot of weight to take that into consideration. Absolutely.

Very good point So are there any myths that you can dispel for us right now?

Absolutely, so a lot of my parents come in and they want their girls to be on birth control and the girls want to be on birth control but the parents are concerned that this is going to affect her ability to have children later on so her long-term fertility. Nothing I do is irreversible everything I do is reversible because I'm dealing with teenagers I want to protect their fertility many of them want to go on to have families later on when they're adults. So that is my goal in some cases like when some of my patients have polycystic ovarian syndrome that can actually compromise a girl's fertility and make it harder later on to have children birth control actually protects her

fertility so that's a big one for me is just protecting my patients overall health. Also in terms of do contraceptives make girls have sex? There have been studies on that, they all have shown that no that is not the case just because I prescribed a contraceptive doesn't mean that that girl is suddenly gonna say hey now I can go out and have sex with anybody I want. That's just not the case the things that help protect girls from having sex too early include open dialogue with their parents or a trusted adult as well as a number of activities so quite frankly the busier a girl is the less time she has right so she's involved in sports or dance or music and academics she's less likely to have time to spend thinking about boys and sex.

and is there a specific age that you should be starting like birth control if you are thinking or is that kind of like up to the person?

Yeah it really varies. It depends on the person. I've had 12 year olds who come in and they're looking for contraceptives usually because they have really terrible periods and heavy bleeding and they come in with pretty severe anemia and need something to control their periods and then I've had 20 year olds who are starting birth control for the first time because they're just becoming sexually active I have 14 year olds who are already sexually active and looking for a method to protect them against getting pregnant. So I really see a variety of patients, some of the patients come in with their parents and their parents know that their children are having sex and want them to be protected. Other patients I see come in are having sex and their parents don't know and they feel that their parents would not understand but they're still trying to be responsible and really want to protect themselves from having children before they're wanted.

How do you think someone should prepare for if they're considering it, how could they prepare for a conversation with you or a conversation with their parent do you have any advice for them?

Sure, so one of the top websites to go to for looking up information about birth controls, is [www. bedsider.org](http://www.bedsider.org). It's a very teen friendly site that has lots of pictures it's very colorful and offers really accurate information about the various types of birth control. Another great site is www.youngwomenshealth.org written by the folks up at Harvard, also offers great information about birth control, contraceptives but also information about painful periods, long periods, heavy periods, polycystic ovarian syndrome and anything to do with a young woman's health. So I think given that teens are all over the internet anyway maybe checking out a couple of websites. If they want to talk to some friends and ask them what they're using that can be helpful although I would caution teenagers that every choice is personal

and just because one of your friends had a good or bad response to a certain type of birth control doesn't mean that you will too so it really depends on the person and what they're comfortable with.

That's a very good point. So I know the young women's center, they have a great social media presence actually and they like tweet a lot about information so I think that's also a good way to get some information too.

Sure

Do you think teen pregnancy is like a big problem in the Bronx, is that what you're seeing now?

Teen pregnancy is a problem. It along with STDs is a big problem in the Bronx especially chlamydia. I think one of the things about prescribing contraceptives to teenagers is it allows me to follow them closely so I never really prescribed a contraceptive method and then send a teen out the door never to see them

again. I always ask them to come back either within six weeks, two weeks or sometimes three months, to check in, and then I follow them pretty closely for that first year to make sure that they are still using condoms because condoms are really the only method that protect against the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and to make sure that they're safe in addition to pregnancy and chlamydia being problems in the Bronx so is reproductive coercion so girls are frequently forced to have sex or they consent to sex with the condom and then the boy may remove the condom which is just not cool and can be very dangerous and so I also just check in with my teens to make sure that they're safe that they know their rights to make sure that they are having sex in a way that's healthy for them and to make sure that they're not in danger.

Yeah that's extremely important condoms and birth control.

Absolutely.

They work together, they are a team

Are there any things that people should think about like when they're considering to get off of birth control so say like a teens been on birth control since they were 15 and they're 22 now and they're like oh you know what I think I want to have a baby, what are things would you mention to them about or talk to them about?

So, I would say if you are considering having a baby or you're considering coming off of birth control the first thing you should do is schedule an appointment with your family medicine physician your primary care physician to talk with them about how to come off the birth control. Many of these birth controls or contraceptives are designed so that you can stop them and go back to ovulating immediately which means that you're able to have a child fairly immediately. There are some forms like

the shot, the depo-provera shot, where that waiting time from stopping the shot to actually being able to conceive and have a child will be longer because of the form of birth control. The pill, the patch, the ring and any LARC method so again the implant or the IUD, as soon as you stop that method you're pretty much going to go back to ovulating very quickly and be able to have a child but I'm also sensitive to the fact that women need prenatal care so it's a really good idea if a teenager or a young adult is considering coming off of their contraceptive method make an appointment with your physician first to talk over how to do that and what to expect.

Is there anything else I didn't cover that you think is super important for teens to know did you like talk about?

Yeah I would say another myth I'd like to dispel is that some

teenagers think that if they don't get a regular period or if they're having sex for the first time they can't get pregnant, that is just not true, a teenager who has had sex for the first time can still get pregnant, a teenager who is not having regular periods can still get pregnant, so contraception is going to be really important in addition to that a teenager who's not having a period every month really needs to make an appointment with an adolescent medicine doctor to find out why is she not having a period every month. We're kind of lucky as girls and women that we get a period even though it might not be fun some time, but it really is another vital sign for us, so just like our heart rate or blood pressure, getting our period every month is a sign that our body's healthy. So if you're not getting a period every month make an appointment with your adolescent medicine doctor I think yeah that's the number one myth that I would want to dispel.

It makes me think I was just telling one of my friends yesterday that like whenever you get your period I think to myself like my reproductive system works it's working yay like that'd be painful but it works

and if it's painful that's another thing, I would want to tell teenagers I hear a lot of teens in the Bronx saying that they have painful heavy periods and they're missing a day or two of school a month that's just unacceptable to me. Girls should be in school we need more female leaders in this world and they get ahead by going to school and doing well in school and so access to reproductive health and to contraception and methods that help alleviate the symptoms of PMS and periods are absolutely critical.

Oh could you speak a little bit more about PMS actually and how contraceptions will help with that?

Does one just prescribe
contraception for that or is it another
medication?

*Premenstrual dysphoric disorder is treated primarily with
contraception and a selective
serotonin reuptake inhibitors or
something like Prozac.*

*Sometimes one or the other is effective
what's been shown is that together they
have a synergistic effect and they're
very effective against PMDD.*

Awesome, well thank you so much Dr. Titchen.
Thank you so much everyone for joining us
at SBH Bronx Health Talk and
again for more information on
contraception or other services
available at SBH, please visit www.sbhny.org.
Thank you again for joining us

Thanks for having me.

