

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs About Emergency Contraception: A Survey of Female Adolescents Seeking Care in the Emergency Department

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OBJECTIVES: This study aimed to assess urban adolescents' knowledge of and attitudes about emergency contraception (EC) and to assess the intention to use EC in particular hypothetical situations. We hypothesized that knowledge about EC would be limited, but that adolescents would support using EC in certain situations.

METHODS: A cross-sectional survey of English-speaking, 14- to 19-year-old adolescent girls presenting for care at 2 urban pediatric emergency departments. The survey was based on previous research with this target population and the constructs of the theory of planned behavior.

RESULTS: We enrolled 223 adolescents; 56% reported a history of sexual activity. Sixty-four percent stated that they had heard of EC. Participants with a history of sexual activity were more likely to have heard of EC compared with those without (odds ratio, 2.6; 95% confidence interval, 1.4-4.7), as were those 17 years and older (odds ratio, 2.3; 95% confidence interval, 1.2-4.3). The majority of participants were concerned about potential short-term and long-term adverse effects (86% and 78%, respectively); many participants were concerned about the cost of EC (45%) and about being able to get to a doctor for a prescription (45%). Participants supported using EC in the following situations: rape (88%), the condom breaks (82%), or no birth control was used (76%). Fewer supported using EC in the following situations: missed 1 oral contraceptive pill (51%) or first sexual experience (57%).

CONCLUSIONS: Participants indicated that although they would support EC use in several situations, they have concerns about EC use and access. Awareness of these factors and potential influences of EC use can guide providers toward effective counseling and interventions aimed to increase adolescents' use of EC in appropriate settings.

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Topics

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