

# A Qualitative Study of Postpartum Contraception Decision Making Among Adolescents

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## Background

- Adolescent mothers are more likely to experience short-interval repeat pregnancies than their non-adolescent counterparts, placing them at risk for both pregnancy-related morbidity and adverse socioeconomic outcomes.
- Increased use of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) has been associated with a decrease in adolescent unintended pregnancies. However, LARC use is less common in adolescents than the general population.
- Factors associated with adolescent contraception decision-making post-partum are not well understood.
- The purpose of this study was to use qualitative methods to better understand contraception decision making from the perspective of postpartum adolescents.

## Methods

- 21 Semi-structured, in-depth phone interviews were conducted with adolescent women at 6 months postpartum.
- Participants were recruited in the first 2 months postpartum during well child visits (WCV) with their infant at a dyadic primary care medical home.
- Each interview was independently coded by two reviewers. All interview transcripts were coded to create a matrix outlining common themes related to contraceptive choice.
- These codes were then looked at further based on subgroup of contraceptive type and race/ethnicity.

## Results

### Cited Reason for Contraception Choice

	Birth control pills	Depo Provera	Implant	IUD
Inconvenience (-)		X		
Duration of protection (+)			X	X
Ability to remember to use (-)	X			
Perceived invasiveness (-)				X
Perceived lack of efficacy (-)	X			
Perceived negative side effects (-)		X	X	

### Convenience

*"I work too much and I only get my schedule a few days in advance for the next month so it would be hard to schedule an appointment [for a Depo Provera shot] every three months."*

### Ability to Remember

*"I would get pregnant fast like within the next month or so since I would forget to take the pills."*

### Side Effects

*"I know a few people who used [the implant] and it affects them in a very negative way. Mostly negatively like emotion wise and I didn't want to experience that."*

*A lot of my friends have [depo] and complain about weight gain, mood swings, hormones."*

### Efficacy

*"I chose [the IUD] because I don't want any more kids. I already have three kids."*

### Perceived Invasiveness

*"I just didn't want to get cut open to get [the implant] put in."*

*It feels kind of weird for me to have something inside my uterus like that."*

## Conclusions

- Six central themes for rationale behind contraceptive use emerged: (1) Convenience versus inconvenience, (2) duration of protection, (3) ability to remember to use, (4) perceived invasiveness, (5) perceived efficacy, and (6) perceived negative side effects.
- Participants also tended to cite their (a) own past experiences, (b) the experiences of others, or (c) a lack of information to support their decisions.
- Though not as widely cited, topics such as pregnancy timing, fear of the procedure itself, medical contraindication, presence versus absence of hormones, and provider recommendation also emerged

## Implications

The information gathered in this study may be used to inform contraception counseling discussions for postpartum adolescents. Providers may use the identified themes to guide open-ended questioning into patient values and priorities in contraception decisions. The varied themes identified in this study emphasize the need to elucidate the individual patient's goals, past experiences, and impressions of each method prior to providing contraception counseling.

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