

The use of contraceptive methods by adolescents: knowledge of high school students*El uso de métodos anticonceptivos por adolescentes: conocimiento de los estudiantes de secundaria**O uso de métodos contraceptivos por adolescentes: conhecimento de estudantes do ensino médio***Aline Aguiar Vieira¹**

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Armada de Oliveira**Submission:** 08-23-2020**Approval:** 08-27-2020**Abstract**

The aim was to identify the knowledge of teenage high school students about contraceptive methods. It is a descriptive, exploratory field research, with a quantitative approach. The setting was a private school, located in the city of Arraial do Cabo, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The research subjects were adolescents enrolled in high school in the research setting. Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out, the results of which were discussed based on theoretical bases relevant to the theme. Regarding the characterization of the 23 research participants, there was a greater number of girls (56.5%). Most of them were 16 (39.1%) years old. 52.1% stated they had already had sexual intercourse, while 47.8% stated the opposite. The male condom proved to be the most known and used method by adolescents. It was observed that the countless myths that guide the use of contraceptive methods guide the understanding and attitudes of adolescents. In this context, the importance of quality sex education in schools is highlighted, as well as encouraging parents to participate in their children's sexual lives, thus preventing these teenagers from using other means to acquire information.

Descriptors: Adolescent Behavior; Teenage Pregnancy; Adolescent Health; School Health Services; Health Promotion; Education.

Resumen

El objetivo fue identificar el conocimiento de los estudiantes adolescentes de secundaria sobre métodos anticonceptivos. Se trata de una investigación de campo descriptiva, exploratoria, con enfoque cuantitativo. El escenario fue una escuela privada, ubicada en la ciudad de Arraial do Cabo, en el estado de Río de Janeiro. Los sujetos de investigación fueron adolescentes matriculados en la escuela secundaria en el ámbito de la investigación. Se realizó un análisis estadístico descriptivo, cuyos resultados se discutieron con base en bases teóricas relevantes al tema. En cuanto a la caracterización de los 23 participantes de la investigación, hubo un mayor número de niñas (56,5%). La mayoría tenía 16 (39,1%) años. El 52,1% afirmó que ya había tenido relaciones sexuales, mientras que el 47,8% afirmó lo contrario. El condón masculino resultó ser el método más conocido y utilizado por los adolescentes. Se observó que los innumerables mitos que orientan el uso de métodos anticonceptivos orientan el entendimiento y las actitudes de los adolescentes. En este contexto, se destaca la importancia de una educación sexual de calidad en las escuelas, así como de incentivar a los padres a participar en la vida sexual de sus hijos, evitando así que estos adolescentes utilicen otros medios para adquirir información.

Descriptores: Comportamiento Adolescente; Embarazo en la Adolescencia; Salud de los Adolescentes; Servicios de Salud Escolar; Promoción de la Salud; Educación.

Resumo

Objetivou-se identificar o conhecimento de adolescentes estudantes do ensino médio acerca dos métodos contraceptivos. Trata-se de uma pesquisa de campo, descritiva, exploratória, com abordagem quantitativa. O cenário foi uma escola privada, localizada na cidade de Arraial do Cabo, no Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Os sujeitos da pesquisa foram adolescentes matriculados no ensino médio do cenário da pesquisa. Foi realizada análise estatística descritiva, cujos resultados foram discutidos a partir de bases teóricas pertinentes à temática. Em relação à caracterização dos 23 participantes da pesquisa, houve um número maior de meninas (56,5%). A maior parte deles tinha 16 (39,1%) anos de idade. 52,1% afirmaram já ter tido relação sexual, enquanto 47,8% declararam o contrário. O preservativo masculino se mostrou o método mais conhecido e utilizado pelos adolescentes. Foi observado que os inúmeros mitos que norteiam a utilização dos métodos contraceptivos norteiam o entendimento e atitudes dos adolescentes. Neste contexto, destaca-se a importância de uma educação sexual de qualidade nas escolas, assim como do incentivo à participação dos pais na vida sexual de seus filhos, evitando assim que esses adolescentes recorram a outros meios para adquirir informações.

Descriptores: Comportamento do Adolescente; Gravidez na Adolescência; Saúde do Adolescente; Serviços de Saúde Escolar; Promoção da Saúde; Educação.



Introduction

The Ministry of Health adopts the definition of adolescence as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), which considers the age group between 10 and 19 years of age. The adolescent population currently represents 17.9% of the total of Brazilians, with around 34 million people^{1,2}.

At this stage of life, the individual goes through unique experiences associated with intense physical, mental and social changes that will serve as a template for the formation of an adult human being. It is also the phase in which moments of uncertainty, isolation, anxiety, affective problems and the beginning of sexual relations arise^{3,4}.

Biopsychosocial changes and the awakening of new interests that surround adolescence can be related not only to the effects on development, but can also lead to risk situations, especially those related to the sexual health of these individuals. This is because the search for new experiences typical of this age group, can contribute to the adoption of risky behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug abuse, making adolescents more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and an unwanted pregnancy².

Worldwide, the teenage pregnancy rate is approximately 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 years and 2 million under 15 years of age annually. Latin America and the Caribbean represents the region with the second highest rate in the world, estimated at 66.5 births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15 to 19 years. In Brazil, about 18% of Brazilians born annually are the children of teenage mothers. In absolute numbers, this represents 400 thousand cases per year^{5,6}.

These data are highly worrying, since the risk of maternal death is doubled among mothers under the age of 15 in low and middle-income countries. Furthermore, teenage pregnancy represents a major challenge for public health in Brazil, since many of these pregnancies end in induced abortions, performed in adverse conditions, which evolve with serious obstetric problems, contributing to the increase in maternal mortality in this age group^{1,5}.

Another concern related to the health of adolescents is the occurrence of STIs, since the increase in HIV / AIDS infection among young people in Brazil, indicates a low use of condoms during sexual intercourse, which contributes to the incidence of other STIs among this population. population¹.

The WHO pointed out between 2009 and 2016 an estimated incidence of curable STI cases of 376.4 million, with emphasis on chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis and syphilis. From 2007 to June 2019, 300,496 cases of HIV infection were reported in Brazil, 11,016 of whom were between 10 and 19 years old^{7,8}.

Based on these notes, it is worth saying that adolescence, as well as other stages of life, deserve attention, especially in the focus of primary care, where preventive educational strategies must be implemented and implemented in order to allow the control of STIs and their consequences, as well as how to avoid the risk of an early pregnancy. In this context, thinking about educational

Promoting the transmission of information about sexuality, and in particular about contraceptive methods, allows greater autonomy for adolescents, as it satisfactorily assists their attitudes and decision-making, reducing the risks related to unprotected and unprotected sexual activity. due care. It is essential that the guidelines provided include all adolescents, without inequalities and distinctions, given that unwanted pregnancies and STIs can reach any individual who does not seize safe and healthy sexual practices¹⁰.

At this juncture, the discussion of the topic of contraception with adolescents is extremely valid in the context of health promotion and disease prevention. In addition, the performance of studies that make it possible to explain the knowledge and the use of contraceptive methods by adolescents can subsidize intervention strategies appropriate to the reality of each group in a more directive way¹¹.

Regarding to nursing in this scenario, it is worth saying that the educator profile inherent in the profession, makes the nurse a member of the health team able to develop and put into practice educational activities that contribute to the sexual activity being practiced in a healthy way by teenagers. For this, understanding about young people's knowledge about contraceptive methods is essential, so that actions are directed more effectively, according to each reality, as already pointed out.

Given the above, the question that guided this study was: What is the knowledge of adolescent high school students about contraceptive methods? The objective was to identify the knowledge of adolescent high school students about contraceptive methods.

Methodology

It is a descriptive, exploratory field research, with a quantitative approach. The setting was a private school, located in the city of Arraial do Cabo, in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The research subjects were adolescents enrolled in high school in the research setting. The choice for delimiting high school is justified because this is the school stage with a greater predominance of adolescents. The inclusion criteria adopted were students of both sexes, aged between 10 and 19 years, with or without an active sex life. Students absent on the days of data collection and those whose parents did not sign the Free and Informed Consent Form were excluded. Thus, in a universe of approximately 50 students enrolled, 23 adolescents aged between 14 and 19 years participated in the research.

Data collection took place in November 2019 and took place through a semi-structured questionnaire designed for this study, which included questions related to the characterization of the subjects and information about the students' knowledge about the use of contraceptive methods.

The information collected was organized in a



Morning-after pill	1	8,3
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database created in the Microsoft Excel® program, and a descriptive statistical analysis was subsequently performed, whose results were discussed based on theoretical bases relevant to the theme.

The study respected the ethical aspects provided for in Resolution No. 466 of December 12, 2012, of the National Health Council¹², being approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Veiga de Almeida University (CEP / UVA), by the Consubstantiated Opinion no. 3,697,111 of November 11, 2019.

Results

Regarding the characterization of the 23 research participants, there was a greater number of girls (56.5%). Most of them were 16 (39.1%) years old. 52.1% stated they had already had sexual intercourse, while 47.8% stated the opposite (Table 1).

Table 1. Characterization of adolescents participating in the research. Arraial do Cabo, RJ, Brazil, 2019

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE SUBJECTS	N	%
Gender		
Feminine	13	56,5
Male	10	43,5
Age (years)		
15	2	8,7
16	9	39,1
17	5	21,7
18	7	30,4
Have had sexual intercourse		
Yes	12	52,2
No	11	47,8

Among the 12 adolescents who reported having experienced sexual activity, the age group of the first relationship was between 14 and 17 years old, with the age of 15 being the most prominent (33.3%). Most (75%) stated that they use contraception, with condoms being the most indicated (58.3%), (Table 2).

Table 2. Sexual activity of adolescents participating in the research. Arraial do Cabo, RJ, Brazil, 2019

SEXUAL ACTIVITY	N	%
Age of 1st relationship		
14	3	25
15	4	33,3
16	2	16,7
17	3	25
Use contraceptives		
Yes	9	75
No	3	25
Method used		
Condom	7	58,3
Contraceptive pill	2	16,7

As for the general knowledge about contraceptive methods, the analysis was divided between adolescents who have already had sexual intercourse and those who have not yet, in order to compare the differences between the understandings on the subject. However, it was observed that there was no significant difference in the results between the two groups, showing that the knowledge of the adolescents participating in the research is similar, regardless of their sexual experience.

Condoms, the contraceptive pill and the emergency pill were the methods mentioned by all participants, from both groups (100%). Then, the Intrauterine Device (IUD) emerged, which represented 91.7% of adolescents who had already had sexual intercourse and 90.9% of those who had not. When asked about the most suitable method in both groups, condoms were the most prevalent, representing 91.7% among those who had had sex and 63.6% among those who had not. Information on contraceptive methods was received at home by a small fraction of adolescents in both groups (Table 3).

Table 3. General knowledge of adolescents participating in the research about contraceptive methods. Arraial do Cabo, RJ, Brazil, 2019

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE	Group that already had sexual intercourse	Group that did not have sexual intercourse
Known methods	N (%)	N (%)
Condom	12 (100%)	11 (100%)
Contraceptive pill	12 (100%)	11 (100%)
Emergency pill	12 (100%)	11 (100%)
IUD	11 (91,7%)	10 (90,9%)
Diaphragm	9 (75%)	4 (36,3%)
Tablet	7 (58,3%)	8 (72,7%)
Vaginal Ring	3 (25%)	2 (18,2%)
Vaginal Sponge	0	1 (9,1%)
Método mais indicado		
Condom	11 (91,7%)	7 (63,6%)
Contraceptive pill	6 (50%)	1 (9,1%)
Did not know	0	4 (36,3%)
Where did you get information		
Home	7 (58,3%)	6 (54,5%)
Friends	6 (50%)	2 (18,2%)
School	4 (33,3%)	7 (63,6%)
Others	11 (91,7%)	4 (36,4%)

Students were also presented with a series of statements about contraception, to assess the specific knowledge of students in relation to each contraceptive method. As in the previous table, the analysis was divided between adolescents who have already had sex



and those who have not yet. However, unlike the previous table, the notes about the specific knowledge of the adolescents showed some divergence in certain aspects, when the two groups were compared.

Regarding non-hormonal contraceptive methods, the use of two male condoms as a safer contraceptive strategy is not considered by most adolescents who have had sex (83.3%), and by only 45.4% of that they have not yet. As for the effectiveness of the female condom, 58.3% of those who have already had sexual intercourse did not know how to inform, while most of those who have not yet had sexual intercourse (63.6%) understand the effectiveness of the method. Both groups recognize that withdrawal does not prevent unwanted pregnancies, nor do they know how to inform about the use of the diaphragm with spermicide or the relationship between the IUD and abortion (Table 4).

Table 4. Specific knowledge of adolescents participating in the research about non-hormonal contraceptive methods. Arraial do Cabo, RJ, Brazil, 2019

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE NON-HORMONAL METHODS	Group that already had sexual intercourse	Group not had sexual intercourse
	N (%)	N (%)
Using two condoms is safer		
Yes	0	1 (9,1%)
No	10 (83,3%)	5 (45,4%)
Did not know	2 (16,7%)	5 (45,4%)
Female condoms are as effective as male's		
Yes	4 (33,3%)	7 (63,6%)
No	1 (8,3%)	0
Did not know	7 (58,3%)	4 (36,4%)
It is possible to get pregnant through withdrawal		
Yes	11 (91,7%)	7 (63,6%)
No	0	1 (9,1%)
Did not know	2 (16,7%)	3 (27,3%)
Diaphragm is more effective with spermicide		
Yes	3 (25%)	2 (18,2%)
No	2 (16,6%)	0
Did not know	7 (58,3%)	9 (81,8%)
IUD can cause miscarriage		
Yes	3 (25%)	2 (18,2%)
No	0	3 (27,3%)
Did not know	9 (75%)	6 (54,5%)

Regarding the specific knowledge about hormonal contraception methods, in a majority, in both groups, adolescents recognize that the contraceptive pill does not prevent STIs. 91.6% of participants who have already had sexual intercourse distinguish factors that interfere with the action of oral contraceptives, while 63.6% of those who have not had intercourse do not know how to inform. Likewise, in both groups, most adolescents were unable to inform about infertility

associated with contraceptives. Regarding the emergency pill, the majority of adolescents who have already had intercourse (50%) discern that its effectiveness is valid within 72 hours after the unprotected sexual act, while in the group that did not have intercourse, most (36.4%) is unaware of such information. Still on the emergency pill, the largest number of participants who have had sexual intercourse (91.7%) believes that this pill should not be ingested constantly, while only 45.4% of those who have not had sexual intercourse understand the same (Table 5).

Table 5. Specific knowledge of adolescents participating in the research on hormonal contraceptive methods. Arraial do Cabo, RJ, Brazil, 2019

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE HORMONAL METHODS	Group that already had sexual intercourse	Group not had sexual intercourse
	N (%)	N (%)
Contraceptive pill prevents STI		
Yes	0	1 (9,1%)
No	12 (100%)	9 (81,8%)
Did not know	0	1 (9,1%)
Alcohol, anti-inflammatories, and antibiotics may decrease contraceptive effect		
Yes	11 (91,7%)	3 (27,3%)
No	0	1 (9,1%)
Did not know	1 (8,3%)	7 (63,6%)
Long-term use of contraceptives can cause infertility		
Yes	5 (41,7%)	3 (27,3%)
No	1 (8,3%)	1 (9,1%)
Did not know	6 (50%)	7 (63,6%)
Efficacy for the morning-after pill		
Until 12h	0	1 (9,1%)
Until 24h	2 (16,7%)	3 (27,3%)
Until 48h	3 (25%)	2 (18,2%)
Until 72h	6 (50%)	1 (9,1%)
Did not know	1 (8,3%)	4 (36,4%)
The morning-after pill can be taken constantly		
Yes	0	1 (9,1%)
No	11 (91,7%)	5 (45,4%)
Did not know	1 (8,3%)	5 (45,4%)

Discussion

The predominance of girls and the age of 16 years among the research participants corroborates with a similar study conducted previously¹¹. The beginning of sexual activity already experienced by the participants represents an expected fact in the Brazilian reality, where sexual life begins most of the time, in this stage of life^{10,13}. The age of first intercourse at 15 years and the statement about the use of contraception testifies to the results of a previous study¹⁴. The predominance of knowledge and the use of male condoms in sexual relations also reinforces data from other studies and allows us to infer that, although this method is extremely valid and indispensable, the dissemination of other forms of contraception is essential, improving the



knowledge of adolescents about this subject matter^{11,14,15}. On the other hand, this point is extremely positive, since condoms are considered the most advisable method for preventing unwanted pregnancies and being the only one to prevent STIs.

In Brazil, knowledge of contraceptive methods is still extremely limited to condoms and oral pills¹⁶. Because of this, there is a need for greater adherence by adolescents to public policies aimed at sex education. In this context, professionals working with adolescents must be available and prepared to guide these young people, ensuring their privacy, creating a safe environment, without judgments and prejudices. It is important to clarify the functionality of contraceptive methods and the correct way of using them¹⁷.

The IUD, which was widely cited by the participants, is considered a method with high contraceptive efficacy. Because it is a barrier contraceptive, it is classified as a non-hormonal method, although it is also available in hormonal form. However, only non-hormonal IUDs are available in the public health system. Such a device can be used by teenagers, and despite its proven rate of effectiveness, there are still many myths surrounding the use of this method¹⁸.

As seen in this study, information about sexual activity was little explored in the adolescents' home environment. This is a worrying fact, since other sources, such as friends and the internet, can provide unsatisfactory quality guidelines, reducing the adolescent's correct perception on the subject. This is because the discussion about sexuality still generates embarrassment among families, who often propose to dialogue strictly with the reproductive and preventive spheres. This reality refers to the need to include the family's perception of the communication of sexuality among the intervention proposals¹⁹.

In relation to the adolescents' specific knowledge about contraceptive methods, it was found that most aspects are more appropriately known by adolescents who have already had sexual intercourse. This can be explained by the fact that these adolescents, having already started sexual practice, feel more interested on the subject, seeking information from a variety of sources. However, as already pointed out, this adolescent often seeks guidance from inappropriate sources.

The Internet represents for this generation a great source of information, where young people have free access to the most varied topics, but often knowledge is transmitted in a wrong way, exposing adolescents to risks¹⁹. Inappropriate information may also be the reason for the countless myths surrounding the use of contraceptive methods, which permeate the generations, as demonstrated in some notes of the participants in this research.

The use of two condoms as a safer strategy was mostly ruled out by adolescents who have already had sexual intercourse, but it did not prove to be such safe information for the group that has not yet started sexual activity. This reality reinforces the need for precise guidance on the use of contraceptive methods, among all adolescents, regardless of their sexual experience. The myths and misinformation surrounding the adolescent population may be the reason

why the failure of the male condom is ten times greater among this age group, when compared to use in adults¹⁸. It is important to note that the use of two condoms is a completely wrong practice due to the high probability of breakage and consequent exposure to diseases.

Regarding the female condom, the result was the opposite, where the safety of the method was predominantly recognized among those who did not have sexual intercourse, while most of those who already did not know how to inform. The female condom is more expensive than the male and has limited distribution¹⁸. This contributes to the fact that the method is little used among the population and for this reason it is not possible for its safety to be proven by the adolescents participating in the research, since all or almost all of them do not have access to the method.

Most adolescents, from both groups, consider that withdrawal does not prevent pregnancy, which represents a satisfactory result, since this strategy is considered one of the least effective and least suitable methods, especially among adolescents. This is because in order for this method to achieve certain effectiveness, it is necessary to control the fertile period, which requires discipline and knowledge of body changes, and these factors are not present in a large part of the adolescent population¹⁸.

In both groups, the participants were unable to report the diaphragm. This is because this method is not well known to the population. It is considered a barrier method, like a condom, but it does not prevent STIs. It prevents the passage of sperm through the uterus and is used in conjunction with spermicidal jelly. Its use offers many advantages, such as not having side effects, however, it still represents a type of contraception that is not widespread²⁰.

About the possibility of IUDs causing abortion, most adolescents in both groups did not know how to inform. As already mentioned, the use of the IUD is permeated by some myths that are widely disseminated among the population. One is the possibility of the method being abortive, which scientifically has no evidence whatsoever¹⁸.

As for hormonal methods, most of the two groups recognize that the pill does not prevent STIs. This result is satisfactory, since, as the name contraception suggests, it is related to the method that aims to prevent an unwanted pregnancy, having no role in the prevention of STIs²¹. For this reason, it is essential that condom use is always encouraged, regardless of the method of contraception adopted.

A significant number of participants who have already had sexual intercourse were able to report that some substances reduce the effect of the contraceptive and this knowledge is extremely valid, as it reduces the chances of an unwanted pregnancy. Contraceptives are drugs like any other and are subject to interactions if combined with other medications or substances, which can minimize their effect on the body. For this reason, it is always advisable to use some barrier method concurrently with the hormonal method²².

Most participants, from both groups, did not know how to report the occurrence of infertility associated with prolonged use of the birth control pill. As already discussed



Vieira AA, Cerqueira LCN, Teixeira PC, Dumarde LTL, Oliveira PP, Koeppel GBO used method by adolescents. It was observed that the countless myths that guide the use of contraceptive methods guide the understanding and attitudes of adolescents.

It was also observed that some information is transmitted to the adolescent in a superficial way, and mostly outside the home environment. For these reasons, teenagers know the methods, but are not sure about their functionality.

In this context, the importance of quality sex education in schools is highlighted, as well as encouraging parents to participate in their children's sexual lives, thus preventing these teenagers from using other means to acquire information.

In this context, the role of health professionals, especially nurses in primary care, fits in promoting educational actions aimed at adolescents. Such actions must be planned in a way that arouses the interest of these young people, with an approach focused not only on biology, but also with a humanized look, establishing bonds of trust. The focus needs to be on the socio-cultural context of each adolescent, with activities being developed through workshops on sexual and reproductive health.

As a limitation of this research, it is possible to point out the data collection performed in only one location, it is not feasible to generalize the results. However, the information obtained in this research is like that obtained in similar scenarios and contexts, which reinforces the accuracy of the data found.

May this study serve as a basis for new research on the subject, expanding the knowledge of adolescents on the subject, seeking that these individuals have their reproductive and sexual health directed in a satisfactory way.

about the IUD, some knowledge coming from common sense permeates the use of contraceptive methods, which may lead to a discontinuation of the use of these methods. Research data show that there is no relationship between long-term use of oral contraceptives and infertility. However, its use is associated with the appearance of deep venous thrombosis, stroke, acute myocardial infarction, depression, among others. Thus, it is extremely important that contraceptives are taken under medical prescription, with due monitoring of their effects²³.

Regarding the use of the morning-after pill or the emergency pill, an investigation already carried out showed that adolescents recognize that it should not be used on a daily basis, testifying to the result of the present study, which pointed out the same information among the participants who already had intercourse²⁴. In addition, a large part of the adolescents who have had a relationship satisfactorily acknowledge the indication of 72 h after the act.

About the correct use of the emergency pill, it is indicated for use after unprotected intercourse, potential failure of a method already used or to victims of sexual violence. It should be used up to 72 hours after sex, but it can be used until the fifth day after unprotected sex¹⁸.

Conclusion

The study achieved the proposed objective, allowing to identify the adolescents' knowledge about the use of contraceptive methods. The division between participants who have already had sex and those who have not yet made it possible to infer that the general knowledge about contraception does not differ between the two groups. However, in relation to knowledge, there was a certain differentiation between the data obtained.

The male condom proved to be the most known and

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