



Myth Watch: Examples of Misleading Information Women Receive at CPCs

The following list is a sample of misleading and inaccurate information given at so-called “crisis pregnancy centers” in Baltimore.

Myth: Natural family planning is as effective as birth control pills.

Fact: Birth control pills are more effective than fertility awareness methods such as natural family planning.¹

Myth: Abstinence is the only thing that prevents pregnancy.

Fact: Numerous birth control methods have been determined to prevent pregnancy.²

Myth: Birth control pills are abortifacients.

Fact: Birth control pills prevent pregnancy.³ They do not cause an abortion.

Myth: Birth control pills are unsafe.

Fact: Birth control pills are the most common form of reversible contraception among women.⁴ Most women can use birth control pills safely.⁵ Birth control pills may also be used to treat painful or irregular periods.

Myth: Birth control pills raise cancer risks.

Fact: Multiple studies show that the use of oral contraceptives reduces the risk of ovarian cancer and significantly lowers the risk of endometrial cancer. While some studies have shown an increased risk of breast cancer with oral contraceptives, other studies have shown no effect. The long term use of oral contraceptives may be associated with an increased risk of cervical cancer

¹ See, USAID and World Health Organization “Comparing Effectiveness of Family Planning Methods,” available through the Maryland Family Health Administration. In the effectiveness chart, birth control pills are displayed as more effective than fertility awareness methods. See also, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, “Birth Control,” and Guttmacher Institute, “Facts on Contraceptive Use.” According to Planned Parenthood, between 12 and 25 out of every 100 couples who use fertility awareness methods each year will have a pregnancy if they do not always use the method correctly and consistently. In contrast, less than one out of 100 women will become pregnant with perfect use and 8-10 women out of 100 will become pregnant with imperfect use of oral contraceptives.

² See, Maryland Family Health Administration “Methods of Birth Control.” This publication lists birth control pills, condoms, Depo-Provera, diaphragm, emergency contraception, Implanon, IUDs, spermicides, sterilization, NuvaRing, and the Ortho Evra patch as methods of birth control in addition to abstinence and fertility awareness methods.

³ American College of Obstetricians-Gynecologists, “Birth Control Pills.”

⁴ See, Guttmacher Institute, *supra* note 1.

⁵ See, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, *supra* note 1.

(though HPV is the biggest risk factor) and can increase the risk of developing liver cancer in some populations that are considered low-risk for liver cancer.⁶

Myth: The formula of birth control pills has been secretly changed and made more powerful.

Fact: All changes to medications are monitored by the Food and Drug Administration.

Myth: Condoms are ineffective and don't protect against STDs.

Fact: Consistent and correct use of latex condoms can reduce the transmission of STDs including Chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, HPV, and genital herpes and are highly effective in preventing the sexual transmission of HIV.⁷

Myth: Abortion increases the risk of breast cancer.

Fact: The National Cancer Institute states that having an abortion does not increase a woman's risk of breast cancer.⁸

Myth: Abortion makes future pregnancies next to impossible.

Fact: Abortion is one of the safest and most commonly provided medical procedures in the United States. Uncomplicated abortion does not cause problems for future pregnancies.⁹

Myth: Abortion providers are not medically trained or licensed.

Fact: In Maryland, only licensed health care professionals may provide abortion services.¹⁰

Myth: Many women have emotional trauma about their abortion, including nightmares and flashbacks. This is called post-abortion syndrome.

Fact: Both the American Psychological Association and Johns Hopkins University researchers have stated in the last year that there are no reputable studies linking long-term depression with abortion and that abortion is not a threat to mental health.¹¹

⁶ See National Cancer Institute "Oral Contraceptives and Cancer Risk: Questions and Answers."

⁷ See Centers for Disease Control "Condoms and Their Use in Preventing HIV Infection and Other STDs (1999); Centers for Disease Control "Condoms and STDs: Fact Sheet for Public Health Personnel" (2009).

⁸ National Cancer Institute, "Abortion, Miscarriage, and Breast Cancer Risk."

⁹ See, National Abortion Federation, "Safety of Abortion."

¹⁰ See, Md. Code Ann., Health-Gen. § 20-208 (Enacted 1991).

¹¹ See, APA Task Force on Mental Health and Abortion. See also Charles Vignetta et al., "Abortion and long-term mental health outcomes: a systematic review of the evidence," *Contraception*, December 2008.