

CONTRACEPTION AND THE AUSTRALIAN MALE: A SURVEY OF 2,438 HETEROSEXUAL MEN USING AN ONLINE DATING SITE.

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Background: There is little research on men's contraceptive knowledge, attitudes and beliefs yet the male partner can influence contraceptive choices. We used a national online dating site to investigate contraceptive experiences, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of a large sample of sexually active, heterosexual, Australian men.

Methods: A personalised email providing a link to an anonymous online survey was sent to men who had logged onto an online dating site within the previous year.

Results: We analysed 2,438 survey responses. A contraceptive method was used at last intercourse by 82% of men <50 years old versus 69% of older men ($P<0.0001$). Condoms (35%), vasectomy (22%) and the contraceptive pill (21%) were the most commonly used methods with older men less likely to use condoms than younger men ($P<0.0001$). Over 80% had heard of each of the available contraceptive methods with the vaginal ring, injection and implant being least well known. The emergency contraceptive pill rated least favourably in relation to perceived harmfulness (32% thought it was 'harmful to the health of the user'). Belief that contraception decision-making should be shared between partners increased from 57% in a 'one-night stand' to 75% in a casual relationship and 92% in a long-term relationship.

Conclusion: Among this sample of sexually active, heterosexual, Australian men there is high contraceptive use, especially vasectomy in older men; a desire to share contraceptive decision-making with their partners, in long term relationships; low awareness of some methods and misperceptions about hormonal contraceptive method safety, especially the emergency contraceptive pill. We believe this is the largest sample of Australian heterosexual men to be studied on contraceptive experience and perceptions and shows that men want to be involved, are prepared to take responsibility for contraception but there appears to be low awareness of some methods, particularly the long acting methods and misinformation about the harmfulness of the emergency contraceptive pill.