

"Study: Girls Take More Chances During First Sex"
CNN.com (10.11.10)

Teenage girls are 30 percent more likely than teenage boys to engage in their first sexual encounter without contraception, according to research presented at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA).

Because 80 percent of contraception used at first sex is condoms, the use of birth control largely depends upon boys, noted Laura Lindberg, senior research associate at the Guttmacher Institute.

In her APHA poster session, doctoral student Nicole Weller said that whether teens had received some form of sex education, or what type they received, had no bearing on whether they used contraception during their first sexual encounter. The types of sex education were categorized as abstinence-only, information about birth control methods, and information about STDs.

The data from the National Survey on Family Growth described 5,012 boys and girls ages 11 to 19 who reported any sexual activity. Among all respondents, the average age of first sex was 16. Weller reported that African Americans were 40 percent more likely than whites to have unprotected first sex.

Upcoming research will examine whether girls are more likely to forego contraception if they are in a relationship. "My hypothesis is that relationship status will override sexual education. I love my boyfriend. I trust my boyfriend. I'm not worrying about getting an STD from him," she said.

The research was conducted at the Arizona State Interdisciplinary Research Center, which is funded by a grant from the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities.