



ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

COVID-19 Clinical Pearl

How does COVID-19 impact the reproductive health of teen patients?

It's too soon to know the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent reproductive health, but we already know that teens often don't get the medical care they need.

Here are some things providers can do to help:

Best practices for contraception

- Long-acting reversible methods are the most efficacious, but the best method for a patient is the one that they want and are able to use.
- All methods can be started immediately as long as the provider is [reasonably sure they are not pregnant](#). This means start the method NOW, no matter where in the menstrual cycle. A urine pregnancy test can be done at home or in the office if there is a concern about pregnancy.
- The [U.S. Medical Eligibility Criteria](#) is a quick way for providers to get an evidence-based answer about the safety of a method if a patient has other medical issues.
- There are incredible websites for teens to read about and choose their favorite birth control method. Favorites include [BC4U](#) and [Bedsider](#).

Pills, patch, ring

- Write for a three-month supply of with one year of refills. Be sure to give refills past one year or longer until your clinic is fully open for business. Talk to patients about other clinics where they can get birth control if they can't get in. The website [Bedsider](#) has clinic finder by zip code.
- Many patients do not know about mail-order services. Talk to your patients about how they can get a three-month supply of all of their chronic medications, including birth control.
- In 2019, [a new bill went into effect in Colorado](#) that allows patients who have been on a pill or patch for three months to obtain a 12-month supply. This law applies to those insurance companies regulated in Colorado, such as Colorado Medicaid.

Condoms

- Condoms are the best way to prevent STDs for teens who have sex. They also work well to prevent pregnancy when used consistently and correctly.
- Patients can get condoms mailed to their home (in a non-marked envelope) from the Denver-based non-profit Cobalt. [Here is the form](#) to request them.

Emergency Contraception

- [Emergency contraception](#) (EC) is an option for anyone who has unprotected sex in the previous five days. Talk to your patients about EC and consider ordering it for them to keep on hand in case a condom breaks. It is more effective the sooner it is used after unprotected sex.
- Plan B is available OTC for anyone to purchase; it is not effective for patients with BMI > 26. Ella (Ulipristal Acetate) is more effective; it requires a prescription and is covered by most insurance.

Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (DMPA)

- Patients who want to start or continue DMPA can do home injections. “Depo SubQ 104mg” comes in a pre-filled syringe and can be given in the abdomen or back of the arm. The package includes images to show the patient how to do the injection.
- Some clinics are also offering “drive by” injections where the patient can stay in their car and get the injection without ever entering the clinic building.

LARC (IUDs and Implants)

- Some patients may be interested in long-acting reversible birth control methods. Insertion procedures for the implant and IUD are considered low-risk for generating respiratory droplets or aerosols. Reassure patients that they are now able to schedule visits at most medical clinics in Colorado and that there will be many precautions to keep them safe.

Colorado Pharmacists can prescribe to patients over age 18

- Many pharmacists in Colorado can prescribe hormonal contraception for patients who are 18 or older. [Here is a link](#) to the protocol.

STDs

- The most common STDs are gonorrhea and chlamydia. Testing and screening can be done by via urine sample, which could be collected at home if a clinic visit is not possible.
- Almost everything a provider needs to know about STDs, including options for treatment, can be found on the CDC’s STD Treatment Guidelines app for [i-phone](#) or [android](#).
- Be sure to offer [expedited partner therapy](#) (EPT).
- Patients who have gonorrhea or chlamydia should also be screened for syphilis and HIV, and have a repeat gonorrhea/chlamydia screen in three months to test for re-infection.

Relationships

- It’s necessary that health providers recognize that for some teens, home may not be a safe place. When checking in with your teen patients during 1-1 time, ask them if they feel safe. The [National Child Abuse Hotline](#) offers many resources for kids and adults, as well as an anonymous hotline.
- It’s also important to check in on peer relationships. Nearly one in three college females report they have been in abusive relationship and most teens say they don’t know what to do when this happens to them or someone they know. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has [resources for teens](#) with a 24/7 call, text and chat hotline. Talking about the [relationship spectrum](#) is a great way for teens to assess their relationship in terms of communication, trust, equality, respect and consent.

Comments, questions or ideas for a clinical pearl topic?

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