

EDITORIAL

Use of emergency contraceptive pill in adolescents

Every year, unintended pregnancies lead to at least 20 million unsafe abortions and result in the death of some 80,000 women, mostly adolescents around the world. Recently an adolescent client came to our family planning clinic consulting about an unwanted pregnancy. She had sexual intercourse without contraception and subsequently her boy friend gave her one emergency contraceptive pill. Two months later, she missed her period and her urine pregnancy test was positive. Obviously she was quite frightened and did not wish her parents to know about her mishap. Thus she came to the clinic for a request of abortion. This example is quite common in our society. Currently, emergency contraceptive pill is very popular among Thai adolescents. However the correct use of this pill should be of great concern. Most of adolescents think that one progesterone only pill is adequate for preventing pregnancy after sexual intercourse. This misconception results in many unexpected pregnancies and sometimes end up in unsafe abortions and maternal deaths. Conversely excessive and too frequent use of post coital progesterone only pill is also another concern in teenagers who have multiple sex partners.

The Yuzpe regimen for emergency contraception is a useful alternative method for preventing pregnancy. It should be used as soon as possible within 72 hours after unprotected intercourse and taking the second dose 12 hours after the first one. The incorrect use of emergency contraception pill causes the failure of method and leads to the problem of unwanted pregnancies. It is time for us, gynecologists, to educate people about the correct use of emergency contraception and safe sex to prevent the unwanted pregnancies and subsequent social problems.

However we must not overlook the use of condom which is convenient and fairly effective emergency contraception for teenagers. It also has an additional value of preventing STD particularly HIV infection, and plays a significant role in the national AIDS preventing programme. We hope that this editorial comment will make readers aware of this important adolescent problem.

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