

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL:
9:00 a.m. E.T., Wednesday, March 19, 1997**

**Matt James or
Tina Hoff**

**A New National Survey on Men's Role in Preventing Pregnancy:
Women and Men Think Men Need to Be More Involved in Contraceptive Choice and Use**

NEW YORK, NY -- Men and women think men today should play a greater role choosing and using contraception, but the reality, say most, is that men are not, according to a new national survey of men and women's perceptions about men's role and responsibility when it comes to preventing unplanned pregnancy. The Kaiser Family Foundation Survey on Men's Role in Preventing Pregnancy finds:

- only 16 percent of men and 13 percent of women say men today "play enough of a role" in choosing a contraceptive method; and
- only 16 percent of men and 14 percent of women say men today "play enough of a role" in making sure contraception is always used.
- the large majority of men and women say men should "play more of a role" in choosing (67% of men and 71% of women) and using (72% of men and 73% of women) contraception.

Do women *really* want men more involved in contraceptive decision making and use? Most say "yes:" 65 percent of women say they want men to be more involved in choosing a contraceptive method and three quarters (75%) say they want men to take on more of the responsibility of making sure contraception is always used. And, what about men, do they *know* what women want when it comes to contraception? Most men say they do: majorities of men say they know women want them more involved in choosing (71%) and using (77%) contraception. So, why aren't men more involved in contraceptive choice and use?

- Are women simply more motivated to prevent or plan for pregnancy? Both men (80%) and women (89%) agree "women feel more responsibility for the children they bear than men." Both men and women also say women have the greatest influence on a couple's decision to have a child (78% of men and 79% of women agree).
- Is men's lack of involvement in contraceptive issues a reflection of the fact that they feel "left out" of the process? At least a third of men (32%) and women (35%) say men today feel "left out" when it comes to birth control and pregnancy prevention;

-- more --

- Do men need to know more about contraceptive options? In fact, more than half of men (57%), say they do not know “a lot” about the different contraceptive options available today, with one in five (20%) saying they know “little or nothing” about contraception.

“From choosing to using contraception, both women and men say men need to be more involved. This indicates an opportunity for men to play a more significant role in reproductive decision making -- a role many seem willing to take on,” said Felicia H. Stewart, M.D., Director of Reproductive Health Programs, Kaiser Family Foundation.

These findings are being presented today at a briefing in New York, “Another Gender Gap? Men’s Role in Preventing Pregnancy,” co-sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, and the National Press Foundation, as part of an ongoing briefing series for journalists on reproductive health issues: *Emerging Issues in Reproductive Health*.

Looking to the Future: New Contraceptive Options for Men

Many men say they would be willing to consider male hormonal contraceptive options, if available; however, beyond condoms and vasectomy, men today have little choice. Two-thirds of men (66%) surveyed say they would be willing to take male birth control pills; 43 percent, Depo-provera, the “shot;” and 36 percent, Norplant, an implant. All three are methods currently available for -- and widely used by -- women, who remain more skeptical about the reality of men’s use of these contraceptive methods. Less than half -- 45 percent -- of women believe men would be willing to use birth control pills; 38 percent, Depo-Provera; and 29 percent, Norplant. More than a third of women (36%) doubt most men would use any of these hormonal methods; in fact, 29% of men say they have no interest in using male birth control pills, Depo-Provera, or Norplant, even if any were available to them today.

Contraceptive Choices Available to Men Today

Sterilization -- both female and male -- remains the most commonly used method of contraception for couples today, according to the National Survey of Family Growth. Among contraceptive users, twice as many women rely on tubal ligation for pregnancy prevention as rely on a partner’s vasectomy. Almost half of men who are not already sterile -- 49 percent -- say they would be willing to consider a vasectomy as a permanent method of birth control; the other half -- 49% -- mostly younger men say they would not. Women are more likely to say they would consider sterilization: 59% of women who are not already sterilized say they would consider having a tubal ligation and 38% say they would not. Married women (62%), and especially married men (57%) are generally more likely to consider sterilization than their non-married counterparts (55% of non-married women and 37% of non-married men).

While women are more likely to opt for sterilization than men, both men and women say they would “prefer” in their relationships for the man to have a vasectomy if they and their partner want a

permanent method of birth control: 40 percent of men say they would “prefer” to be the one to be sterilized, and 44 percent of women say they also would “prefer” that their partner had a vasectomy in these circumstances. Married men (43%) are more willing to opt for a vasectomy over their wife having a tubal ligation than non-married men (36%) if they and their partner want a permanent method of birth control.

Condoms, the only reversible male contraceptive currently available, remain a popular method of contraception for many couples, and the best contraceptive option to protect against the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Yet, men and women identify some issues that may affect condom use:

- 51 percent of men and 61 percent of women agree that some men may not like using condoms because condoms can be “difficult to use;” and
- 62 percent of men and 76 percent of women agree that some men may not like using condoms because they worry condoms “will affect their sexual performance.”

Most men (56%) and women (57%) say when couples use condoms it is primarily for the purpose of disease prevention, not birth control.

Methodology

The Kaiser Family Foundation Survey on Men’s Role in Preventing Pregnancy was a random-sample telephone survey of 1,005 American adults (503 men and 502 women) ages 18 and older. The survey was conducted for the Foundation between March 3 and 5, 1997 by Market Facts, Inc. The margin of error in the national sample is plus or minus 3 percent, at the 95 percent level of confidence. The margin of error for the sub-samples of women and men is plus or minus 4 percent.

* * *

The Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is a non-profit, independent national health care philanthropy and is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. The Foundation's work is focused on four main areas: health policy, reproductive health, HIV, and health and development in South Africa.

Copies of the actual questionnaire and national top line data by gender for the findings reported in this release (#1251) are available by calling the Kaiser Family Foundation’s publication request line at 1-800-656-4533. Additional background information about men and contraception prepared for the briefing at which these findings were presented are also available through this same service (#1252).

Other reports are available on previously released Foundation surveys on public knowledge and attitudes regarding reproductive health-related topics, including: abortion (#1042), teen pregnancy and teen sexuality (#1043), emergency contraceptive pills (#1044), and more on men contraception, and pregnancy (#1056), the safety of the Pill (#1111 and #1112), and sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV (#1206 and 1207).