

CDC: Many teen moms didn't think it could happen

January 19 2012, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

A new government study suggests a lot of teenage girls are clueless about their chances of getting pregnant.

In a survey of thousands of [teenage mothers](#) who had unintended pregnancies, about a third said they didn't use [birth control](#) because they didn't believe they could pregnant.

What were they thinking, exactly, isn't clear. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) survey didn't ask [teens](#) to explain their reasoning.

But other researchers have talked to teen moms who believed they couldn't get pregnant the first time they had sex, didn't think they could get pregnant at that time of the month or thought they were sterile.

"This report underscores how much misperception, ambivalence and magical thinking put teens at risk for [unintended pregnancy](#)," said Bill Albert, a spokesman for the Washington, D.C.-based National Campaign to Prevent Teen and [Unplanned Pregnancy](#).

Other studies have asked teens about their contraception use and beliefs about pregnancy. But the CDC report released Thursday is the first to focus on teens who didn't want to get pregnant but did.

The researchers interviewed nearly 5,000 [teenage girls](#) in 19 states who gave birth after unplanned pregnancies in 2004 through 2008. The survey was done through mailed questionnaires with telephone follow-

up.

About half of the girls in the survey said they were not using any birth control when they got pregnant. That's higher than surveys of teens in general, which have found that fewer than 20 percent said they didn't use contraception the last time they had sex.

"I think what surprised us was the extent that they were not using contraception," said Lorrie Gavin, a CDC senior scientist who co-authored the report.

Some of the teen moms were asked what kind of birth control they used: Nearly 20 percent said they used the pill or a birth control patch. Another 24 percent said they used condoms.

[CDC officials](#) said they do not believe that the pill, condoms and other forms of birth control were faulty. Instead, they think the teens failed to use it correctly or consistently.

Only 13 percent said they didn't use birth control because they had trouble getting it.

Another finding: Nearly a quarter of the teen moms said they did not use contraception because their partner did not want them to. That suggests that sex education must include not only information about anatomy and birth control, but also about how to deal with situations in which a girl feels pressured to do something she doesn't want to, Gavin said.

The findings are sobering, Albert said. But it's important to remember that the overall teen birth rate has been falling for some time, and recently hit its lowest mark in about 70 years.

Albert said it would be a mistake to come away from the report saying,

"They can't figure this out?" "Most of them are figuring it out," he said.

More information: CDC report: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr>

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