

Study reveals no link between hormonal birth control and depression

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Many women worry about the potential side effects of hormonal contraceptives, including depression. However, researchers at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center conducted a comprehensive review of current research and found there is not sufficient evidence to link birth control and depression. Credit: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

Women face several options when it comes to birth control, so potential side effects often factor into their decision. Depression is a common concern for many women, but a new study by researchers at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center is putting patients at ease. It found there's no evidence to support a link between hormonal birth control and depression.

"Depression is a concern for a lot of [women](#) when they're starting [hormonal contraception](#), particularly when they're using specific types that have progesterone," said Dr. Brett Worly, lead author of the study and OB/GYN at Ohio State Wexner Medical Center. "Based on our findings, this side effect shouldn't be a concern for most women, and they should feel comfortable knowing they're making a safe choice."

Worly and his team reviewed thousands of studies on the mental health effects of contraceptives. They included data tied to various contraception methods, including injections, implants and pills. Similarly, researchers reviewed studies examining the effects of hormonal [birth control](#) on postpartum women, adolescents and women with a history of [depression](#), all with the same conclusion: there is insufficient evidence to prove a link between birth control and depression.

"Adolescents and pregnant moms will sometimes have a higher risk of depression, not necessarily because of the medicine they're taking, but because they have that risk to start with," said Worly. "For those patients, it's important that they have a good relationship with their healthcare provider so they can get the appropriate screening done - regardless of the medications they're on."

Worly said patient concerns are valid, and he wants women to continue having open and honest discussions with their doctor about which options work for them.

"We live in a media-savvy age where if one or a few people have severe side effects, all of a sudden, that gets amplified to every single person," he said. "The biggest misconception is that birth control leads to depression. For most patients that's just not the case."

Most women have tried at least one method of contraception in their lives, with nearly 37 million women in the United States currently using birth control. Sixty-seven percent of current users have opted for a non-permanent hormonal method such as an oral pill, but among those, 30 percent have discontinued their use due to dissatisfaction with potential side effects.

Provided by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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