

Hit and miss sex safety

“Few understand the ‘nitty gritty’ details of contraceptives”

There are big gaps in Australians’ understanding of safe sex, with few people using contraceptives correctly and most knowing very little about the range of contraceptive options on the market, RMIT research has found.

Preliminary results from the Contraceptive Experiences Project show half of the people using condoms did not wear them each time they had sex, while about 12 per cent of women using oral contraceptives missed a pill at least once a month.

Alicia Mitic, who is investigating the contraceptive practices, knowledge, attitudes and decision-making of adults as part of her Doctor of Clinical Psychology, said most of the 576 people who had taken part in the online survey had only vague knowledge of the contraceptive options available.

“Few respondents understood the ‘nitty gritty’ details of the contraceptives they used, such as failure rates and potential side-effects,” Mitic said.

“A big concern is that even though most people were using some form of contraception (primarily condoms or the pill) few were using them correctly, increasing their risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

“They also had very little knowledge of the wide range of contraceptives available - many had never even heard of some of the options that were listed in the survey such as injections, implants, IUDs or natural family planning methods.”

Other early findings from the questionnaire include:


- 40 per cent of respondents had never been tested for sexually transmitted infections

- 14 per cent had been diagnosed with some form of STI in the past, primarily genital warts, herpes and chlamydia

- 17 per cent were unsure of their partner’s STI status

- 3 per cent had lied to their partner in the past about their STI status

- More than one-third of respondents had experienced negative side-effects related to contraceptives

Volunteers aged 18 or over are still needed to take part in the anonymous “Know your options” online survey, with recruitment of participants open until February. 

The questionnaire is at: www.rmit.edu.au/psychology/contraceptive-experiences-project



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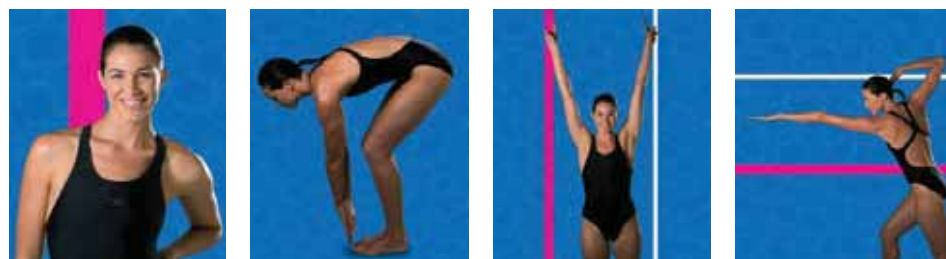
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