

# Five Ways To Prevent Abortion (And One Way That Won't):

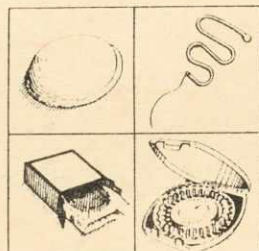
**T**he way to prevent abortion is *not* to make it illegal. That won't work. It never has. Whenever governments have made abortions illegal, they have not stopped them. Throughout the centuries, when women have felt abortion to be their only option, they have had them. Whether they were legal or not. In Canada, abortion was illegal before 1969. Approximately 40,000 Canadian women went "underground" each year for illegal operations. Many died for lack of medical care. Thousands were maimed. *All* were forced to behave as if they were criminals in order to do what they felt was right for themselves. Those days are gone forever.

Still most of us would like to see the need for abortion reduced. This will only come as the natural result of *reducing the number of unintended pregnancies*. Planned Parenthood has worked for decades toward that goal. We advocate the following ways to prevent abortion.

## 1 Make contraception more easily available.

The quickest way to reduce the number of abortions in Canada is to increase the availability of contraception. The shocking fact is that 46 percent of Canadians believe that they do not have access to contraception and family planning services. For many others they are prohibitively expensive.

Two-thirds of Canadian women are currently of reproductive age. Many of them do not have contact with family planning providers. Half of the pregnancies they experience are unintended.



The diaphragm, IUD, the condom, the pill. Easier access would prevent hundreds of thousands of unintended pregnancies and abortions. New methods of birth control are also needed.

Sexuality, as well as fertility issues, are of central importance to the health and well-being of Canadians. Very few health issues affect families and individuals as intimately as those involving sexual attitudes and decision-making. However, Canadians lack the most basic information and support which would enable them to take control of their reproductive health. Although 83 percent of Canadian adults believe that sexuality education should be taught in schools, only one half of schools in Canada

provided any sexuality education in 1984. Most of the curriculums were optional!

One in five teenage girls becomes pregnant before she is 20. These pregnancies often result in serious medical, economic and social consequences for mother and child. Research has shown that access to education and clinical services reduces the rate of unintended pregnancies.

One would expect anti-abortion leaders to embrace these programs. But the same people who speak loudly against abortion have fought to eliminate all government support for family planning services and education.

Canadians are being subjected to the negative propaganda of the anti-choice movement now more than ever. Governments are being pressured right across the country. But if the anti-family planning forces should ever succeed, the results are predictable: less contraceptive use, more unintended pregnancy, and an increase in abortions.

## 2 Provide young people with a better teacher than experience.

The people who oppose abortion and contraception also oppose sexuality education programs for teenagers. They apparently think that by saying nothing at all, teen sexuality will go away.

From our work with hundreds of thousands of teenagers, we can tell you that a shocking number of them know nothing at all about how reproduction works, how their own bodies work, and how to prevent pregnancy. Their teacher is trial and error. Plus television, movies and misinformation from peers.

Anti-abortion leaders argue that information about sexuality should come from parents. Agreed. But are parents doing it? Do they know what to say? Or when to say it? Research shows it's extremely rare for parents to feel comfortable enough to discuss sexuality with children. When they do, important information is often omitted.



Almost all parents though, regardless of how comfortable they are discussing sensitive matters with their children, support the idea that sexuality education programs should be offered in schools and other community settings.

These programs provide young people with a comprehensive understanding of the facts. And a basic element of sexuality education programs is to help teens understand that waiting until they're ready to have sex — and not succumbing to peer pressure — is a legitimate option.

Sexuality education does not increase sexual activity, it increases knowledge and responsibility. The net result: fewer unintended pregnancies and fewer abortions.

## 3 Increase the involvement of men.

No woman ever made herself pregnant. Yet for centuries, men have ignored their responsibility in preventing unintended pregnancies. "I've got no kids — that I know of" is an all-too-familiar male expression.

Fortunately, change is in the air. That change must be encouraged. Many family planning agencies now run programs

which help men recognize their equal responsibility in all aspects of sexuality: decision-making, obtaining and using contraception, and the handling of any crisis which occurs.

*Men:* to share the joy, share the responsibility too.

## 4 Create new birth control methods.

By far the most common method of birth control for married couples is sterilization because it offers the best protection against unintended pregnancy. But sterilizations are permanent.

Among the "temporary" methods — diaphragm, condom, IUD, the pill — none is perfect. The diaphragm and condom may be considered inconvenient. The IUD and pill may cause complications.

People want temporary methods which are safe, effective and easy to use, without side effects. We must continue the search. Scientists point to several research leads which could produce some new methods of birth control by the year 2000, possibly including a male contraceptive. But none of this will be possible without a dramatic increase in government support.

## 5 Make Canada friendlier to children.

Teenage pregnancy rates in Canada have decreased somewhat. And yet, over 36,000 teenagers became pregnant in 1985. Many of those who didn't get pregnant, were simply the lucky ones. In 1985 22.9 percent of abortions in Canada were had by teenagers. More and more teenagers are sexually active at younger ages, some as young as age 12. One in every four teenagers is sexually active by the age of 15. Two out of every three teenagers are sexually active by age 19.

A study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute found that the countries with the lowest teenage pregnancy rates were found to be those with a more realistic and accepting attitude toward sexuality, and open access to family planning services. Other factors cited were economic opportunity for young people and the encouragement of self-esteem.

Canadians need to face the fact that the environment in which our children are raised — the quality of housing, child care, education, understanding and acceptance — are factors which affect how they feel about themselves, and their ability to cope with the pressures of life.

For many young people today, sexual expression is often the only way to feel loved. Becoming pregnant, or causing pregnancy, is a tragic outcome of that quest for intimacy.

Planned Parenthood's studies support the premise that young people with high levels of self-esteem are the least likely to compromise their futures by taking the risk of unintended pregnancy.

To help young people avoid this we must provide them with meaningful alternatives: a better understanding of human sexual development, a better education, real career opportunities, job development, training, placement and hope for a better life.

These are five ways to guarantee far fewer unintended pregnancies and far fewer abortions. Shouldn't the anti-abortion movement support these efforts? Shouldn't the government? Shouldn't we all?

The anti-abortion movement is increasingly hostile to the actual concerns of real people. They fail to acknowledge that lives are being ruined every day. Not by legal abortion, but by lack of education and access to contraception, by the lack of more effective, safer contraceptives, by men who refuse to share responsibility, and by society's inattention to the fundamental needs of our young people. Reversing this situation would prevent unintended pregnancies by the thousands.

You can also help. Use the coupons above. Post this ad in a public place. And, if you can, support our work with a contribution and by contacting Planned Parenthood in your area. Thank you.



Planned Parenthood  
Federation of Canada

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**THE WAY THAT WON'T WORK.**

**NO! NO! NO!**

**OUTLAW ABORTION**

Public opinion polls have recently shown that a majority of Canadians favour preserving safe, legal abortions, but there is still a vocal minority which does not. They want to make abortion a crime, robbing women of the right to decide for themselves when or whether to have children. Lately, some of these people have been accosting those who enter abortion clinics. This will not succeed in preventing abortions. If they were really concerned about preventing abortion, they would be out there putting their money, their time and energy into prevention so that unintended pregnancies do not occur in the first place. Whenever women feel abortion is absolutely necessary, for whatever personal reasons, they have them, even if they are illegal, even in circumstances that are dangerous, expensive and humiliating. Our society will never return to those dark days when government could force women to choose between compulsory pregnancy or dangerous, back-alley abortions. But there is something we can do about reducing the need for abortion. Planned Parenthood has always worked toward that goal. You can too.

To: **The Honourable Jake Epp,  
Minister of National Health & Welfare**

I believe that it is vital to ensure that all Canadians have adequate and universal access to all reproductive health information and services in this country. I believe that education and clinical services are the key to reducing unintended pregnancies and thereby reducing abortions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

To: **The Honourable Ramon Hnatyshyn,  
Minister of Justice**

I believe that it is vital to ensure that all Canadians have adequate and universal access to all reproductive health information and services in this country. I believe that education and clinical services are the key to reducing unintended pregnancies and thereby reducing abortions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

To: **Planned Parenthood of Nova Scotia  
P.O. Box 1206, (N), Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5H4  
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