

5 Ways to Prevent Abortion

(And One Way That Won't Work)

The need for abortion will be reduced by *reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies*.

1. Make contraception more easily available.

The shocking fact is that millions of Americans do not have access to contraceptives or know how to use them. For many others they are prohibitively expensive. There are more than three million unintended pregnancies each year. Easier access to contraception would prevent hundreds of thousands of unintended pregnancies and abortions. It would also be cheaper: every public dollar which goes to family planning saves more than three dollars, in the next year alone, that would otherwise be spent for health and welfare services associated with unintended births.

2. Give young people a better teacher than experience.

Sex education 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 unwanted pregnancies and fewer abortions.

3. Increase the involvement of men.

Men and women have equal parts in creating pregnancies. Therefore, they should have equal roles in preventing unwanted pregnancies. 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 handling any crisis which occurs.

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, none is perfect. Unless there's a dramatic increase in government support, new methods will not be available to American women any time soon.

5. Make America friendlier to children.

A study by The Alan Guttmacher Institute found that the U.S. has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in most of the industrialized world. The environment in which our children are raised — the quality of housing, child care, education, understanding and acceptance — are all factors which affect how they feel about themselves and their ability to cope with the pressures of life. Studies support 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 unintended pregnancies we must provide them 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.

The way to prevent abortion is *not* to make it illegal.

That won't work. It never has. In the two decades before abortion was legal in the United States, nearly one million women went "underground" each year for illegal operations. Tens of thousands were maimed or died.