

February 2017 post: LARC Counseling

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Case: A 15-year-old sexually active female presents for contraceptive counseling. Her medical history is significant for ADHD and she reports difficulties remembering to take her medication consistently. She's currently on her period and her urine pregnancy test is negative.

Long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) methods, comprising subdermal implants and intrauterine devices (IUDs) provide the most effective protection against pregnancy coupled with excellent continuation rates and affordability. Experts including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend LARCs as first-line contraceptives for all women including adolescents. However only 5% of sexually active adolescents using contraception have an IUD and fewer have a contraceptive implant. While adolescents are skilled at independently gathering reproductive health information studies show that counseling by health care providers has the largest impact on LARC uptake.

Visual aids help when counseling adolescents in the office. Posters on contraception including "understanding effectiveness," "risks are a reality" and "help during an oops moment," are available from Bedsider. In addition, they have many other teen friendly contraception education tools including:

Method Explorer: <https://www.bedsider.org/methods>

Another factor affecting LARC counseling is provider comfort and lack of trained primary care providers. Specific to the adolescent population, it has been found that when providers attend a LARC skills training session comfort in counseling increases and they are more likely to recommend them.

The ACOG initiated LARC program provides a list of LARC training opportunities that is open to all health care providers regardless of specialty and professional society affiliation, information is available at; www.acog.org (enter "LARC, clinical training opportunities" in search tab)

The Family Planning National Clinical Training Center offers LARC training, information is available at; <http://www.ctcfp.org/larc/>