

Teen birth rate falls in US

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The birth rate among US teenagers has continued to decline, but health authorities said Tuesday that even greater strides could be made if more teens used long-acting forms of contraception.

More than 273,000 babies were born to mothers aged 15 to 19 in 2013, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

The teen [birth rate](#) in 2013, the most recent year in which data is available, was 26.5 births per 1,000 teenagers.

This was more than double that in 1991, when the birth rate was 61.8 births per 1,000 [teens](#).

"Improved contraceptive use has contributed substantially to this decline," said the CDC Vital Signs report.

"A key strategy for further reducing teen pregnancy is increasing awareness, access and availability of long-acting reversible [contraception](#) (LARC), specifically [intrauterine devices](#)."

Nearly 90 percent of sexually active teens surveyed said they used birth control the last time they had sex.

The most common forms of contraception were condoms and [birth control pills](#).

However, relatively few teens are opting for implants and intrauterine devices, which are the most effective kinds of birth control.

Long-acting reversible contraception use among teens was 0.4 percent in 2005 to but rose to 7.1 percent in 2013.

Of the 616,148 female teens the CDC studied in 2013, 17,349 (2.8 percent) used IUDs, and 26,347 (4.3 percent) used implants.

"LARC is safe to use, does not require taking a pill every day or doing something every time before

having sex, and, depending on the method, can be used to prevent pregnancy for three to 10 years," said the CDC report.

"Less than one percent of LARC users become pregnant during the first year of use."

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have endorsed LARC as a first-line contraceptive choice for teens, the report added.

However, the CDC stressed that LARC does not protect against [sexually transmitted diseases](#).

"The good news is that teens are taking responsibility for their reproductive health needs," said Lisa Romero, a health scientist in CDC's Division of Reproductive Health.

"We also know that teens using birth control do not often choose intrauterine devices and implants—the most effective types of birth control.

"Parents and teens are encouraged to talk with their health care professional to learn about the various types of [birth control](#), including long-acting reversible contraception."

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