Contemporary intrauterine contraception use among adolescents: Examination of a national health claims database

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Executive Summary

U.S. health providers are often reluctant to prescribe intrauterine devices to teenagers, even though they are now approved for use in this population by the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control. To address these concerns, we examined whether teenagers experienced complications with intrauterine device use more or less commonly than young adults 20-44 years of age. This study also compared complications associated with two different types of intrauterine devices, the copper-containing intrauterine device and the levonorgestrel-containing intrauterine device, among this group of women.

A large set of health records that were kept by a health insurance company were examined to determine whether the insurance company had paid for a patient to receive an intrauterine device. Records were found for 90,014 patients who had an intrauterine device inserted between 2002 and 2009, and who had also been enrolled in their insurance program for at least 12 months after the intrauterine device had been inserted. We then examined whether teens reported more complications than adult women with intrauterine devices, and whether teens had discontinued their intrauterine device more frequently than adult women. This study also determined whether one type of intrauterine device (the levonorgestrel-containing intrauterine device) caused more complications and was discontinued earlier than the other type of intrauterine device (the copper-containing intrauterine device).

Of the 90,014 patients with an intrauterine device, we found that serious conditions, such as ectopic pregnancy and pelvic inflammatory disease occurred very rarely in all age groups, regardless of the type of intrauterine device they were using. However, teens were more likely than older women to report painful periods, having stopped their period, or becoming pregnant. Teens were not more likely than older women to discontinue using their intrauterine device within one year after it was inserted. Overall, this study found that the intrauterine device is safe for teens and adult women. We also found that the levonorgestrel-containing intrauterine device may be a better choice for some women because it was less likely to cause complications or to be discontinued prematurely compared to the copper-containing intrauterine device.