Formative research for the development of strategies to increase dual method use among adolescents and young adults

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Abstract: Unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are significant health problems in the United States, and African American and Latino youth experience higher rates of both. The simultaneous use of birth control and condoms is a strategy that has demonstrated effectiveness in preventing both unintended pregnancy and STIs. Eight focus groups were conducted with African-American and Latino adolescents and young adults to inform strategies to increase dual method use, defined as the simultaneous use of condoms and highly effective contraceptives. Participants described dual method users as "smart," "careful," and "focused." Positive emotions were also associated with dual method use, including confidence and security. Participants readily identified cost and access as environmental obstacles. Many believed dual method use was important, but others doubted that it was necessary, especially within a committed relationship. These findings, coupled with established theories of behavior change, suggest that public health professionals should emphasize the positive images and emotions associated with dual method use. They must help participants negotiate, and help reduce, environmental barriers to dual method use. It is also important to address dual method use within the context of relationships.

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