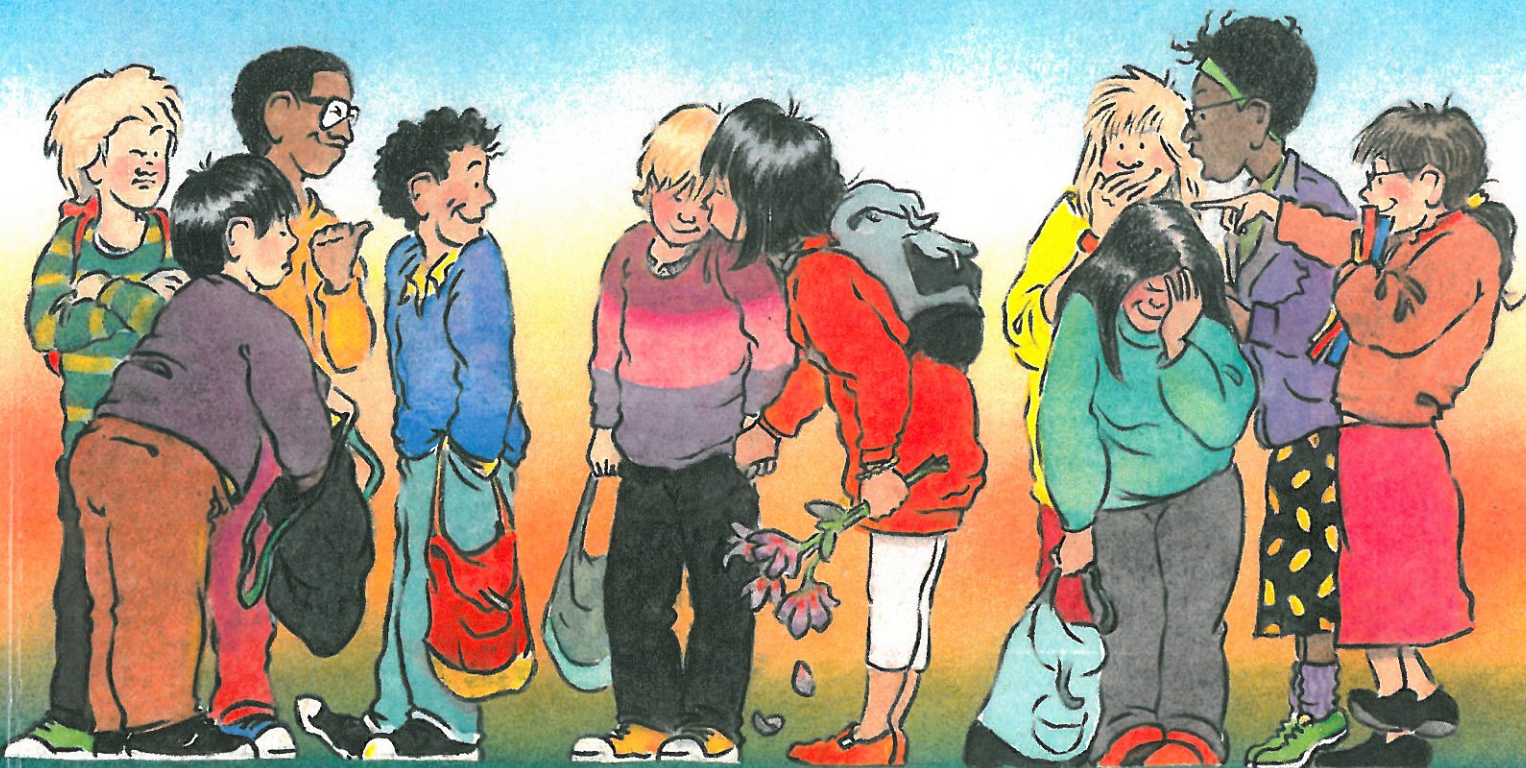


"It's Perfectly Normal is informative, reassuring, and responsible. . . . I wish every child (and parent) could have a copy." —Penelope Leach, Ph.D., author of *Your Baby and Child* and *Children First*

The
Definitive Book
About Puberty
and Sexual Health
for Today's
Kids and Teens

It's Perfectly Normal

CHANGING BODIES, GROWING UP,
SEX & SEXUAL HEALTH



From the author and illustrator of *It's So Amazing!*

ROBIE H. HARRIS illustrated by MICHAEL EMBERLEY

It's Perfectly Normal

CHANGING BODIES, GROWING UP, SEX & SEXUAL HEALTH

When young people have questions about sex, real answers can be hard to find. Providing accurate, unbiased answers to nearly every conceivable question, from conception and puberty to birth control and AIDS, *It's Perfectly Normal* offers young people the real information they need now more than ever to make responsible decisions and to stay healthy.

An American Library Association Notable Book

A Booklist Editors' Choice

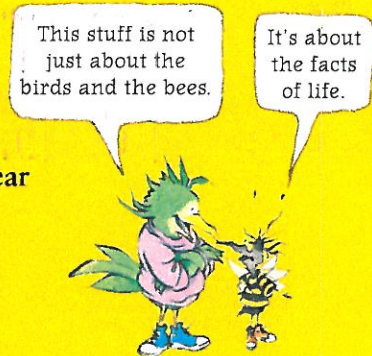
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"I recommend *It's Perfectly Normal* to parents and children who are coming into adolescence. They will love it."—T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., author of *Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*

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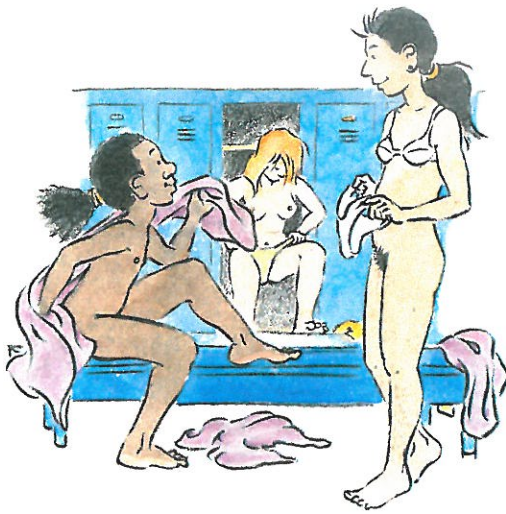
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want to ask your mother, father, or other members of your family what puberty was like for them and when they began to go through it. You might find some clues about how you may develop.

Kids often wonder whether it matters if their bodies go through puberty slow or fast, early or late, or first or last. When your body changes, or how fast or slowly your body changes, has nothing to do with how your body will look and perform.

It's hard to be an early bloomer... or a late bloomer.

I just need the flowers to bloom. I don't care when they bloom.



Even so, among one's friends or in one's class, it can be hard to be the first or last girl who menstruates, or the first or last boy whose voice changes; or the first or last girl to wear a bra, or the first or last boy to shave; or the shortest kid one year and the tallest the next year.

Unfortunately, kids tease other kids about the ways their bodies look and grow during puberty. A kid's arms, hands, legs, and feet may grow longer and bigger before the rest of his or her body catches up. Or a boy's voice may crack right in the middle of a sentence. Or a girl may develop a large pimple on her forehead just before going to a party. Often these are the kinds of things kids are teased about as they go through puberty.

Many kids worry about their friendships during puberty — probably because puberty is a time when some kids start to have boyfriends or girlfriends. One of your friends, even your best friend, may begin to be interested in and sexually attracted to other kids, whereas you are not the least bit interested. One of your friends may start to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. Or you may have a boyfriend or girlfriend when your best friend doesn't.



Perfectly Normal Masturbation

During puberty, when the sex hormones cause boys' and girls' sex organs to become more active, many kids begin to have even more pleasurable and excited feelings about their own bodies — and they may also be more attracted to and interested in other people's bodies.

These feelings are often called sexual feelings or "feeling sexy." Even though they are hard to describe, they are normal feelings. They happen at different times and in different ways for different kids.

Boys and girls, teenagers, and grown-ups too, experience sexy feelings when they masturbate. Masturbation is touching or rubbing any of your body's sex organs for pleasure — because it feels good. One everyday term for masturbating is "playing with yourself."

Mas-tur-ba-ting.
I've heard
about that.

Just another
big word.
That's all it is.



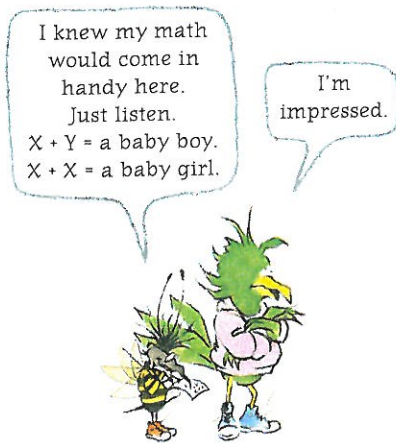
Some people think that masturbation is wrong or harmful. And some religions call masturbation a sin. But masturbating cannot hurt you. And it does not result in pregnancy or in getting or passing on infections that are spread by sexual contact. Many people masturbate. Many don't.

Whether you masturbate or not is your choice. Masturbating is perfectly normal.

When people masturbate, they usually rub their sex organs with their hands or with something soft, like a pillow. A girl often rubs her clitoris; a boy often rubs his penis. Both the clitoris and the penis are sensitive to touch.



Among the twenty-three chromosomes in each egg cell and each sperm cell is one sex chromosome. There are two kinds of sex chromosomes — either an X or a Y. All eggs carry an X chromosome and all sperm carry either an X or a Y chromosome.



If an egg is fertilized by a sperm with a Y chromosome, the united single cell will develop into a baby boy — XY. And if an egg is fertilized by a sperm with an X chromosome, the united single cell will develop into a baby girl — XX.

Whether you are male or female was determined by which chromosome — an X or a Y — was in the sperm from your father that fertilized your mother's egg.

The genes inside your body carry lots of information about you and determine many things — but not everything — about you.

Where you are brought up and how you are brought up, including the kind of food you eat and

the kind of exercise you get, as well as the people who are around you and the events that occur as you grow up, also help to shape many things about you. That's why no two people in the world — even identical twins — are exactly alike. Each of us is unique.



A Kind of Sharing

Cuddling, Kissing, Touching, and Sexual Intercourse

Sexual intercourse, or as it is often called, “making love,” is a kind of sharing between two people. The very beginnings of a new human being — a baby — can form, immediately after

sexual intercourse, if a sperm cell joins with an egg cell.

Touching, caressing, kissing, and hugging — often called “making out” or “petting”—are other kinds of sharing that can

make two people feel very close and loving and excited about one another. People can and do become sexually excited without having sexual intercourse. Choosing to wait to have sexual



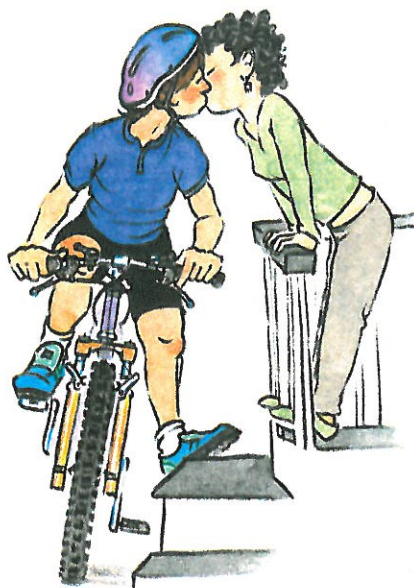
intercourse until one is older or feels more responsible is called “postponement.” Choosing not to have sexual intercourse is called “abstinence.”

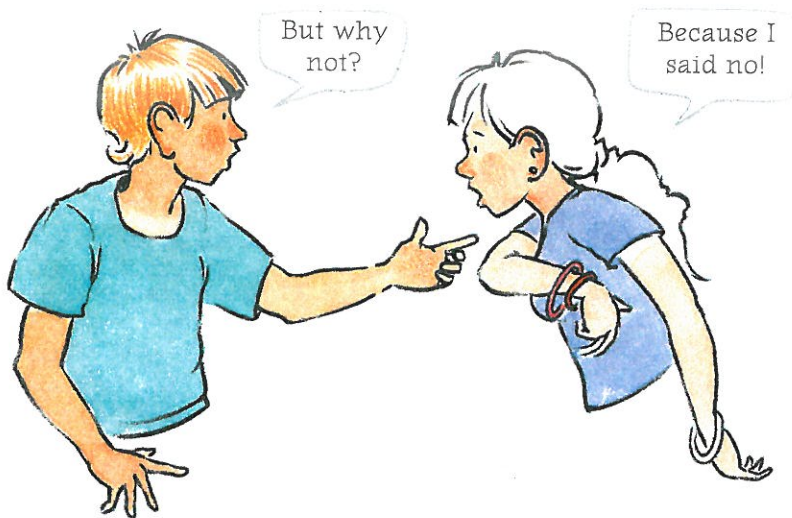
When two people feel they are too young to have sexual inter-

course, do not know each other well enough, or do not want to have sexual intercourse for any other reason, they may decide just to hold hands, cuddle, dance, kiss, or make out.

Sharing between two people

who care about each other always means having respect for each other’s feelings and wishes. This includes respecting each other’s right to say “No!” to any kind of sexual activity — at any time and for any reason.





Sexual intercourse usually begins with two people touching, caressing, kissing, and hugging each other.

After a bit, the female's vagina becomes moist and slippery, her clitoris becomes hard, and the male's penis becomes erect, stiff, and larger. Sometimes a bit of clear fluid that may contain a few sperm comes out of the tip of the penis and makes it wet. The female and male begin to feel excited about each other.

It is now possible for the male's erect penis to go inside the female's vagina, which

stretches in a way that fits around the penis. The moisture from the vagina makes it easier for the penis to go in.

This kind of sexual intercourse is called "vaginal intercourse." It is also called "vaginal sex."

female and male may hug and kiss and touch each other even more as all of this is going on and feel more and more excited.

When these feelings come to a climax, semen is ejaculated from the penis and spurts into the vagina, and the muscles in the vagina and uterus tighten and finally relax. A small amount of fluid may come out of the vagina. This is called "having an orgasm."

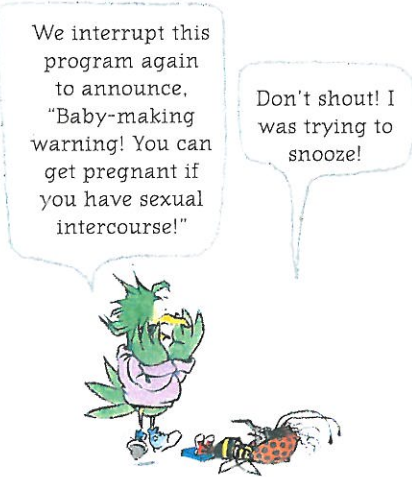
A female and male may have orgasms at different times. And sometimes one person has an orgasm and the other doesn't. After an orgasm, most people feel relaxed, content, and sometimes even sleepy.



As the male and female move back and forth in rhythm, the movement of the penis inside the vagina soon feels very good. The

Every time a couple has vaginal intercourse it can result in a baby — unless the female is already pregnant.

People have a lot of mistaken ideas about how a girl or woman who has had vaginal intercourse can and cannot become pregnant. It's important to know that a girl or woman can become pregnant even if she is standing up during vaginal intercourse; even if it is the very first time she has had vaginal intercourse; even if she has had vaginal intercourse only once; even if she thinks or feels she is menstruating; even if she does not have an orgasm.



A girl or woman can also become pregnant even if the boy or man pulls out before he ejaculates. If sperm are ejaculated close to the opening of the vagina — or even if just a few sperm spurt out before ejaculation — it is possible for them to swim up the vagina and join with an egg. This can also happen even when a female and a male do not have vaginal intercourse, if sperm are ejaculated close to

the opening of the vagina.

Waiting to have sex until one is old enough to take good care of a baby makes good sense. The surest way not to become pregnant is to abstain from — not have — vaginal sex.

However, if a female and a male decide to have sexual intercourse, there are ways — called birth control — that can help protect them from becoming pregnant and having a baby. And a couple can help protect each other from getting infections such as HIV that are spread by sexual contact if they use a new condom correctly and every time they have sex. This is one way of practicing “safer sex.”

There are other ways people make love and have sex. When a person puts his or her mouth on a female’s vulva or on a male’s

penis, this is called “oral sex” or “oral intercourse.” When a male’s penis goes inside another person’s anus, this is called “anal sex” or “anal intercourse.”

Some think that when people have oral sex or anal sex, they are not having sex — and that they are abstaining from sex. But having oral or anal sex are not ways of abstaining from sex. They are ways of having sex.

A female cannot become pregnant after having oral or anal sex. But anyone — female or male — can get infections such as HIV that are spread by sexual contact by having oral or anal sex. Using a new condom or barrier correctly and every time a person has oral or anal sex is a way of practicing safer sex.



Many people who choose to postpone or abstain from sexual intercourse say that they can still have a close, loving, and sexy relationship with another person.

Sometimes, when people choose to have vaginal intercourse, they have planned to have a baby. But other people may want to wait to have a baby or may not want to have a baby at all. That's why knowing how to prevent pregnancy is important.

Birth control and *contraception* are the two names given to the many ways of preventing a pregnancy.

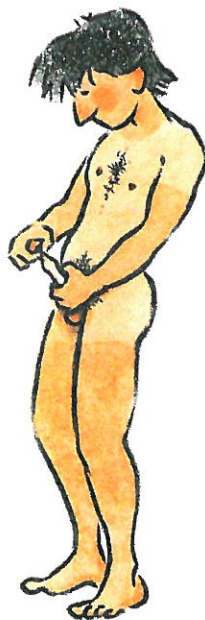
Contra is the Latin word for *against*. *Ception* is part of the word *conception*, which means *beginning*. *Contraception* means *against beginning a pregnancy*.

There are many kinds of birth control, and some work better than others. A person must learn how to use them correctly and every time he or she has sexual intercourse in order for them to work. However, no method of birth control can be guaranteed to work 100 percent of the time.

Condoms, spermicide, and sponges are types of birth control that can be bought at a drugstore, a convenience store, or even a supermarket. They are usually displayed in a special section or on the counter next to the cash

register. These kinds of birth control are called over-the-counter contraceptives.

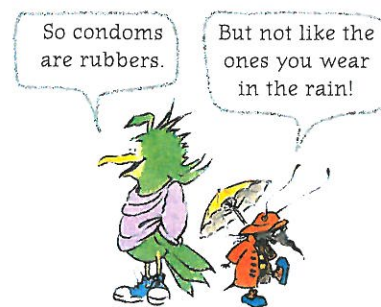
A male condom is a soft, very thin cover that fits over an erect penis. When a male ejaculates, semen is kept inside the condom and sperm are not able to unite with an egg. But sometimes semen can leak out. A condom prelubricated with silicone or a condom used with a water-based lubricant can prevent the start of a pregnancy. The lubrication can also keep a condom from breaking or slipping.



Putting on a male condom

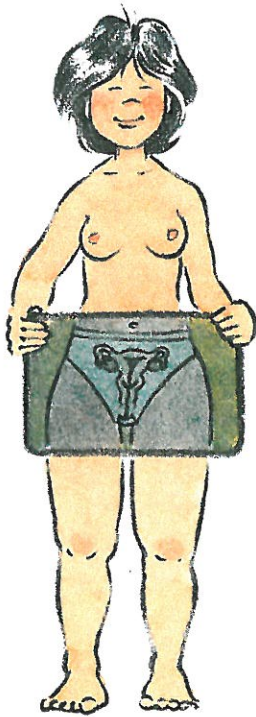
Condoms are called “rubbers” because they are usually made out of a rubbery material called latex. There is another type of male condom, made out of a strong, fairly thin, rubbery

material called polyurethane. It is important to use a latex or polyurethane condom — not lamb-skin. Viruses that are transmitted by sexual contact, such as HIV and hepatitis B and A can seep through tiny pores in the lamb-skin and cause a person to become infected.



A condom designed to fit inside the vagina, called the female condom, is also made out of polyurethane. This soft pouch-like condom is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse.

Using a new condom during sexual intercourse, correctly and every time, can also help prevent the spread of infections — mild infections as well as life-threatening infections such as HIV and hepatitis B and A. This is a way of practicing safer sex. It's important for people to understand that any type of birth control method, when used by itself — *without* a condom — *cannot* prevent a person from getting an infection from or passing on an infection to another person.



made of artificial hormones that keep the ovaries from releasing eggs. This kind of birth control is injected in a female's upper arm or buttocks. Depo Provera is injected every three months. Lunelle is injected once a month, and the first injection needs to be given within five days after the beginning of menstruation.

The diaphragm and cervical cap are small latex cups that fit inside the vagina and are placed against the cervix before sexual intercourse. Both can prevent sperm from entering the cervix and traveling to the Fallopian

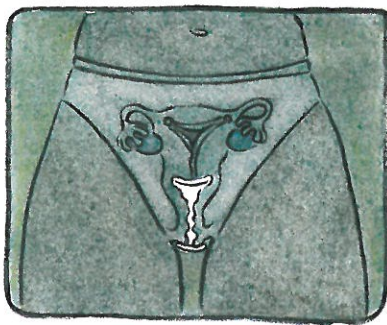
tubes. And both must be used with a spermicide.

An IUD, or intrauterine device, is a small plastic device that is placed inside the uterus by a trained health-care professional and can prevent an egg from planting itself in the uterus's lining.

The ring and the patch also keep the ovaries from releasing eggs. The ring is a small, soft, flexible plastic ring a female inserts into her vagina. It must stay in place for three weeks, and then be removed for one week to allow menstruation to take place. After menstruation, the female inserts a new ring.

The patch is a thin patch of plastic that sticks to the skin. It is placed by a female on the skin of her upper arm, upper torso, stomach, or buttocks — but should not be placed on the breasts. Each week for three weeks, a new patch is placed on the female's body. The fourth week, during menstruation, no

Where They Fit



Female condom



Sponge



Diaphragm



Cervical cap



IUD

patch is used. After menstruation, a new patch is placed on the skin again each week for three weeks.

If a person makes the decision to have sexual intercourse, the most useful protection against pregnancy or infection is the correct use of birth control before or at the time of sexual intercourse.

If there is an emergency and a woman or girl has been raped — forced to have sex against her will — there are emergency contraceptive pills that she can take to prevent the start of a pregnancy. These pills can be used if there are other emergencies — if a condom breaks, or a patch falls off, or a woman or girl has unprotected sex for any reason. They should not be relied upon as a regular form of birth control. The pills contain a hormone or hormones that are thought to prevent ovulation, fertilization, or the planting of a fertilized egg in the lining of the uterus. These pills must be taken within 120 hours — five days — after vaginal intercourse. But it is more effective when taken as soon as possible after unprotected vaginal intercourse.

At the moment, in most states, a female must have a prescription from a health-care professional to obtain emergency contraception pills. In a few states, these pills can be purchased without a prescription.

Some methods of birth control, such as the rhythm method or the withdrawal method, are not considered effective.

When a male and female use the rhythm method, they try to figure out when the female's ovary has released an egg and then abstain from having vaginal intercourse during that time. However, it is very difficult to know when an egg has been released, because the time can vary from month to month — especially for many teenage girls.

When a couple uses the withdrawal method, the male removes his penis from the female's vagina just before he ejaculates. This method does not work very well either because some semen may leak out before ejaculation or because the male may fail to remove his penis before he ejaculates.

Sometimes when people decide not to have more children, they may choose to have a simple operation called sterilization.

When a male has this operation — called a vasectomy — a small piece of the vas deferens is removed or tied off by a doctor. As a result, the semen that is ejaculated no longer carries any sperm.

When a female has this operation — called a tubal ligation — a small piece of each Fallopian tube is removed or tied off by a doctor

so that an egg cannot get to the uterus and sperm cannot get to an egg.

Some religions and groups and some individuals believe that using any method of birth control is wrong. Others believe that using the rhythm method and withdrawal method is fine.



However, they also believe that using over-the-counter and prescription birth control methods is wrong.

Still others think birth control is a fine and responsible way to prevent an unwanted pregnancy or delay having a baby. These people use birth control to help them plan a family.

Your parents, doctor, or nurse are good people to talk with about birth control, postponement, and abstinence. If you talk with a doctor or nurse, your talk will be confidential. Neighborhood health clinics or family planning clinics are also places to go for information.

Laws and Rulings

Abortion

An abortion is a medical procedure performed for the purpose of ending a pregnancy. Some pregnant females choose to have abortions. People's feelings about having abortions are not always simple, however, and can range from relief to sadness, from worry to fear.

I've heard about abortion.

All I know is that lots of people talk about it, especially on radio and on TV.



The word *abort* means *to stop* or *to end something at an early stage*. An abortion is usually performed in a clinic or a hospital by a doctor or other trained health-care professional and is a safe procedure when done early. The pregnancy is ended by removing the embryo or fetus from the uterus. The procedure itself takes about five minutes and is usually performed during the first three months of pregnancy,

before most females even look pregnant.

There are pills that can end a pregnancy and are used as another method of abortion. They can be taken by a pregnant female during the first nine weeks of a pregnancy and require visits to a doctor's office or a clinic. The pregnant female then takes a series of pills over several days. The pills cause the lining of the uterus and the embryo to leave the female's body.

These are some, but not all, of the reasons why a female or a couple might want or need to end a pregnancy:

- The female has an illness or inherited disease that makes the pregnancy or birth dangerous to her health and might even cause her death.
- A test shows that the fetus is carrying a serious inherited disease or a serious birth defect.
- The mother or father is sick and unable to take care of a baby.
- The parents do not have enough money or time to take good care of a baby or they already have

children and cannot afford another child.

- The parents feel they are too young to take care of a baby in a responsible manner.
- The female feels she was not ready to become pregnant.
- The female was forced to have sexual intercourse against her will — raped — and became pregnant as a result.
- The female is single and feels she is not able to raise a child on her own.
- The female did not intend or want to become pregnant.

People have very strong feelings about whether or not a female has the right to choose to have an abortion. In some countries, abortion is a right for all women and girls; in others, the right to abortion is either restricted or prohibited.

In 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States, which is the highest and most powerful court in the nation, ruled that a woman has the right to end an unwanted pregnancy. This ruling also says that no state can limit that right