



Christian Voices for Life  
Weekly Pro-Life  
Education  
Prayer  
Action

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## Hormonal Contraceptives Can Affect Brain Function

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**Education:** A new study published in *Hormones and Behavior* scientific journal examined how oral contraceptive (OC) use during puberty/adolescence affected stress reactivity and brain structure and function. (1) The results showed that women who had used OCs during puberty showed reduced stress reactivity. They found that “OC use is also related to significant structural changes in brain regions implicated in memory and emotional processing.” These changes, explained Nafissa Ismail, the corresponding author of the study, “could provide a neural mechanism for why some women develop mood-related disorders following oral contraceptive use.” (2)

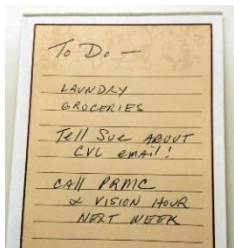
Oral contraceptives are currently used by 150 million women worldwide, sometimes beginning during the critical developmental phase of puberty/adolescence. (2) Earlier studies have shown that hormonal birth control is linked to mood swings and depression and that women using oral contraception have “significantly smaller hypothalamus volume” compared to women not taking the pill. The hypothalamus regulates mood, appetite, sleep cycles, and sex drive, along with body temperature and heart rate. (3)

It is also well known that oral contraceptives increase risk of blood clots that can cause strokes, and breast and other forms of cancer. (4) The general belief that hormonal contraceptives are safe is clearly not verified by science.

1. Sharma et al, “Use of the birth control pill affects stress reactivity and brain structure and function”, *Hormones and Behavior*, Vol. 124, August 2020, 104783.
2. <https://www.liveaction.org/news/new-study-hormonal-contraceptives-brain-structure-function/>
3. <https://www.liveaction.org/news/birth-control-negatively-affect-mental-health/>
4. <https://www.christianvoicesforlife.org/documents/2019/5/Birth-Control-Pills-NOT-SAFE-with-refs.pdf>



**Prayer:** Please, Lord, help all women to understand the significant risks of hormonal contraceptives, to both their physical and mental health. Help all doctors who prescribe these drugs be aware of the risks and be diligent in warning their patients. Help them to consider refusing to prescribe these drugs and be able to offer fertility-awareness based methods of family planning as an alternative for married women, and encourage abstinence for their unmarried patients, particularly teens. May all young women come to know and follow your beautiful plan for sexuality.



**Action:** If you know parents who are arranging for their teen daughters to use oral contraceptives, warn them about the serious health risks involved. Encourage them that their daughters can choose abstinence, especially if they truly understand all the reasons to delay sex. Help is available for parents to assist them in encouraging abstinence and protecting their children from sexual harm. [Download](#) our “Resource List for Parents to Protect Your Children from Sexual Harm.” The list also includes resources for help to protect younger children from sexual abuse, and to warn them about the dangers of pornography.