



CWHS

# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Oral contraceptives were originally designed to mimic hormone patterns during a woman's natural menstrual cycle, although they have evolved for use to suppress menstruation.<sup>1</sup> Total menstrual suppression was initially suggested for women with disorders related to the menstrual cycle such as endometriosis.<sup>2</sup> This practice is now commonly recommended to women without such disorders. However, there is not enough information on the consequences of long-term use of contraceptives in the schedules recommended. Knowledge of the medication used to suppress menstruation will help in determining future education, if needed. Therefore, the California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) assessed women's knowledge and use of hormonal contraceptives to suppress menstruation.

In 2007, the CWHS asked women ages 18 and older the question: "Have you heard about the use of hormonal contraceptives such as pills, shots or patches to suppress or reduce the number of menstrual cycles?" If women answered "Yes", they were then asked: "Are you currently taking or using any of those currently to suppress menstrual cycles?" The following data analyses were conducted on 2773 women ages 18-49 and results were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population.

Overall, 84.7 percent of women reported having heard of hormone contraceptives to suppress menstrual cycles. However, only 12.4 percent of women reported currently using hormone contraceptives to suppress their menstrual cycles.

## Knowledge and Use of Menstrual Cycle Pill Among California Women, 2007

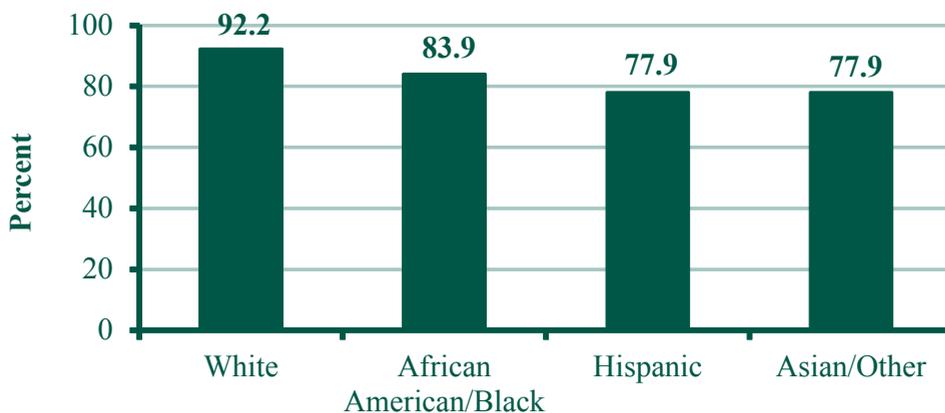
Department of Health Care Services  
California Department of Public Health  
Office of Women's Health

### Public Health Message:

*The trend among young women to use a pill to suppress their menstrual cycle will need to be monitored. The long-term health and reproductive effects of menstrual suppression remain unknown and should be investigated, since greater hormone use among younger women could have long-ranging implications.*

Figure 1

### California Women Who Have Heard of Pill to Stop Periods, by Race/Ethnicity\*, 2007



\*Asked of women under age 50

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2007

*Knowledge and Use of Menstrual Cycle Pill Among California Women, 2007*

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**Knowledge of Menstrual Cycle Pill**

- White women (92.2 percent) were significantly more likely to have heard of a hormone contraceptive to stop their cycle than African American/Black (83.9 percent), Hispanic (77.9 percent), and Asian/Other women (77.9 percent;  $p < .0001$ ) (see Figure 1).
- Women living in households with income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) were significantly less likely to have heard about hormone contraceptives to stop their cycle (77.7 percent) than women living above the FPL (90.1 percent;  $p < .0001$ ) (see Figure 2).
- Women with health insurance were significantly more likely to have heard of a hormone contraceptive to stop their cycle (86.9 percent) than women without health insurance (76.6 percent;  $p < .0001$ ).
- There were no significant differences across age groups concerning knowledge of a hormone contraceptive to suppress periods.

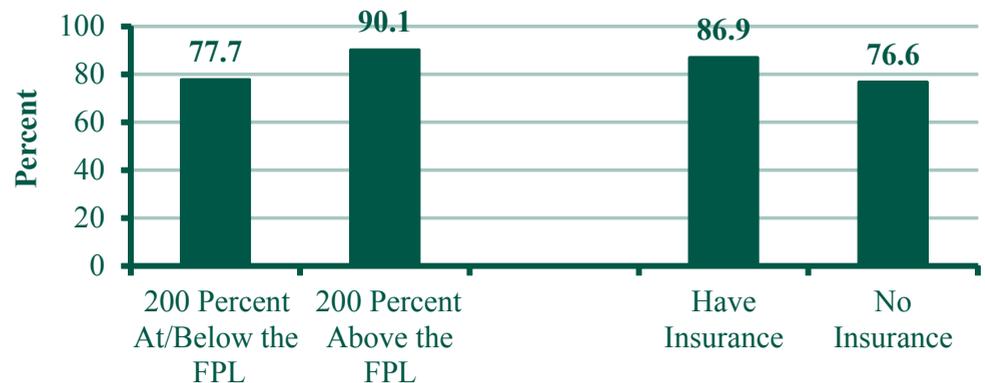
**Use of Menstrual Cycle Pill to Stop Periods**

- Women ages 18-29 were significantly more likely to be using a contraceptive to stop their periods (17.7 percent) than women ages 30-39 (9.8 percent) and ages 40-49 (7.8 percent;  $p < .0001$ ) (see Figure 3). Only women ages 18-49 were examined; however, there were four women over age 50 who reported using the contraceptive to stop their periods.
- There were no significant differences across race/ethnicity, poverty status, or health insurance status groups concerning using a hormone contraceptive to stop periods.

White women, those living above 200 percent of the FPL and those with health insurance, were more likely to have heard of a pill to suppress their menstrual cycle. While women reported low rates of using hormonal contraceptives to stop menstruation, such use was highest among younger women.

Figure 2

**California Women Who Heard of the Pill to Stop Periods, by Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and Insurance Status\*, 2007**



\*Asked of women under age 50

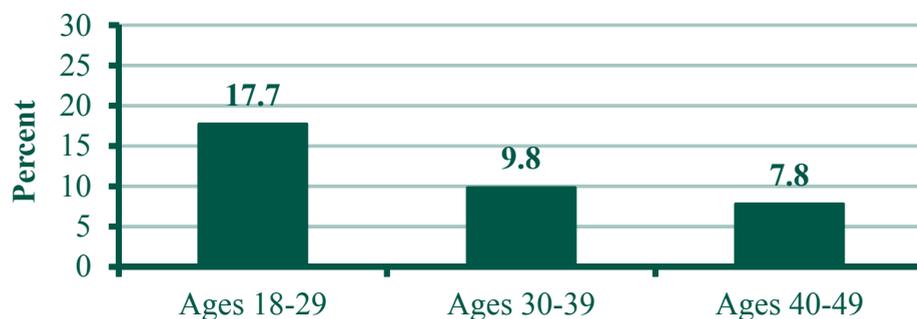
Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2007

*Knowledge and Use  
of Menstrual Cycle  
Pill Among California  
Women, 2007*

Department of Health Care  
Services  
California Department of Public  
Health  
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Figure 3

**California Women Who Are Taking a Pill  
to Stop Their Periods, by Age Group\*,  
2007**



\*Asked of women still having periods

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2007

- 1 Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. What you need to know: menstrual suppression. <http://www.arhp.org/uploadDocs/menstruationfactsheet.pdf>. Published April 2008. Accessed July 2010.
- 2 Johnson-Robledo I, Barnack J, Wanes S. "Kiss your period goodbye": menstrual suppression in the popular press. *Sex Roles*. 2006.;54(5-6):353-360.

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