

Case 9: Birth Control vs. Rebecca bow bow

Rebecca is a 15-year-old sophomore at East High, and very close to turning 16. She is in a happy and healthy relationship with her boyfriend, Dwight. Dwight is a junior at East High and is 17 years old. She wants to go on birth control because she is considering becoming sexually active with Dwight and is very knowledgeable about the importance of birth control and safe sex. She knows that if she doesn't go on birth control she risks the possibility of pregnancy. Her school has a strong health program, and often holds symposiums about safe sex and pregnancy prevention. Her father, Chris, is a single parent and her only health insurance provider. Chris is very religious, but Rebecca is not. Both Chris and Rebecca are respectful of each other's religious beliefs, or lack thereof. He opposes birth control because of his strong religious beliefs. Chris's Catholic beliefs tell him that sex without marriage is sinful and abstinence is the only appropriate form of birth control. He also doesn't approve of Rebecca dating in general. Chris also hopes that by not allowing her to go on birth control, she won't be sexually active with her boyfriend.

Rebecca is able to get birth control on her own without Chris's knowledge; however, it would be difficult financially for Rebecca to purchase her own birth control. There are local teen health centers that provide birth control without parental consent, but it is not free. Rebecca also doesn't have a car, so she would need to buy a bus pass or pay for a friend's gas since her father wouldn't be driving her.

Additionally, Rebecca has a close relationship with her dad and doesn't want to lie to him. She loves spending time with him and she would consider them very close. Since Rebecca doesn't have a mom in the picture, she lives with only her dad. Rebecca is also an only child, so her father and she spend a lot of time together. For these reasons, she feels uneasy about going behind his back to obtain birth control. Birth control is something that Chris feels very strongly about. If he found out that Rebecca went behind his back about it, she fears it might seriously damage their relationship.

The legal age of consent is 16 years old in Michigan. The average age that people in the United States start having sex is 17 years old. The average age that people in the United States start birth control is 16 years old. The rate of teen pregnancy has dropped from 59.9% in 1990 to 20.3% in 2016. This all-time low is in part due to the increase in accessibility of birth control.

Study Questions

- 1) Should Rebecca purchase her own birth control without telling Chris?
- 2) Should Chris allow Rebecca to go on birth control, even though it's against his religious beliefs? How much should a parent's religious beliefs affect their children's lives?
- 3) Is it Chris's place to make reproductive decisions for his daughter? What age should girls be allowed to make their own decisions about reproductive health?