

A Prospective Study of Adolescent Women's First Coital Experience: The Influence of Individual Factors on Protective Behaviors

By: [Amanda E. Tanner](#), Devon J. Hensel, and J. Dennis Fortenberry

AE Tanner, DJ Hensel, JD Fortenberry. A Prospective Study of Adolescent Women's First Coital Experience: The Influence of Individual Factors on Protective Behaviors. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 44 (2), S45

Made available courtesy of Elsevier: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2008.10.126>

*** © 2009 Society for Adolescent Medicine. Reprinted with permission.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

Abstract:

Purpose: First coitus is a major transitional event into adulthood imbued with cultural and personal relevance, especially for women. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenology of young women's first coital experiences by characterizing these events, specifically focusing on sexual interest, feelings of love, mood, and protective behaviors.

Keywords: published abstract | first coitus | women | sexual interest | contraceptive use

Article:

Purpose: First coitus is a major transitional event into adulthood imbued with cultural and personal relevance, especially for women. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenology of young women's first coital experiences by characterizing these events, specifically focusing on sexual interest, feelings of love, mood, and protective behaviors.

Methods: Daily diary data were collected as part of an ongoing, longitudinal study of sexual relationships, sexual behaviors, and STI among adolescent and young women (n = 387; 14 to 17 years at enrollment). First coital events were identified for 41 women; intrapersonal variables focused on sexual interest and feelings of love (1 item, 5-point Likert scales ranging from: none of the day to most of the day). Behavioral variables focused on contraceptive methods at first coitus and included: *condom use* (no/yes) and *oral contraceptive use* (no/yes). One way ANOVA was used to assess differences in mean levels of sexual interest and love on different days; χ^2 tests were used to examine the relationship of contraceptive method to first coital events. All analyses were performed with SPSS, 15.0; estimates were significant at $p < 0.05$).

Results: Overall, feelings of being in love and sexual interest were reported at about 'half of the day' with the majority of these first events (27/36; $\chi^2 = 38.920$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$) condom protected. Sexual interest was significantly higher ($F [2,41] = 20.696$, $p = 0.013$) on day of first

sex ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.39$), as compared to day after first sex ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 1.27$), but not significantly different from day before first sex ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.68$). Feeling in love decreased from day before ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.78$) to day of first sex ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.80$), and to day after first sex ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.68$); however, none of these changes were significant ($F [2,41] = 0.953$, $p = 0.393$).

Conclusions: While a variety of demographic, biological, psychological and social predictors of adolescent sexual initiation have been explored, the influence of sexual interest, feelings of love, and mood have largely been overlooked. Our findings suggest that these variables are independent and driving forces of sexual and contraceptive behavior. They are predictive of and responsive to first coital experiences. Therefore, the findings have implications for incorporating intrapersonal factors into sexual health programs targeted at young women to encourage protective behaviors at first (and subsequent) coital events.

Sources of Support: NIH U19 AI 31494.