

Next Monday is the 45th anniversary of the Pill becoming available on the NHS: a milestone in the history of women's liberation. It undoubtedly prevented millions of unwanted pregnancies, and the social problems that can result from them. But what has been its full impact on female lives, and its legacy for our sexual health? ANNA SMYTH meets five women who talk openly and frankly about the revolutionary oral contraceptive



## Women find it harder to insist that men use other protection'



**HELEN RAW,**  
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I went on the Pill when I was 16 because I had a lot of problems with my periods, and together with my mum and my doctor, decided it was the best option. I was very embarrassed about going on it: I didn't want the doctor to think I was sleeping around or that I would be using it for contraception, and I definitely didn't want any of my peers to find out.

There was an entirely different attitude back then; it wasn't the status symbol that it is now. Many young girls these days seem quite happy for people to know they're using it, and to assume it's for sexual reasons, whereas back then I was horrified by the thought.

Young people seem so blasé about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and many assume that if they get into trouble, someone else will fix it. It is a terrible attitude, but I believe it stems from the wider problem that people

have abdicated responsibility for themselves.

It's harder for women now to insist that men use some other form of protection, because they are so used to the idea of women being on the Pill. But I think if you were with someone who refused to use any other method of contraception, you would have to wonder about their motives. Some men take their responsibility less seriously because of oral contraceptives - I have known men who just want to go out and get as much female booty as they can and simply don't care about the consequences. But I also know many others who are careful and respectful.

If [doctors] are going to hand out the Pill indiscriminately to women under 20, they need to provide proper education on the other risks involved, and monitor the women properly afterwards.