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"Does Jewish law or tradition offer any guidance on contraception?"

Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

Secular Jews are not influenced by traditional edicts "to be fruitful and multiply" or "not to spill one's seed." However, we do recognize that there are benefits to contraception in their own right, including female health, family planning, and disease prevention. In the end, Humanistic Judaism takes the position that individuals will make their own decisions as to what birth control methods, if any, they wish to use. We also strongly believe that this is not a privilege but a right that needs to be protected. The government needs to get out of the business of legislating on these choices.

We are also living in an age that the rabbis, not to mention our great-great-grandparents, could not have imagined. Pre-marital sex is commonplace today, if not encouraged, as part of building a relationship with a caring partner. Promiscuity is equally prevalent. "Friends with benefits" is a phenomena of our time. Even the idea of marriage for love and as a sexually exclusive monogamous relationship is relatively modern.

Perhaps it would be easier to live in a less complicated time. But the clock can't be wound back. And so we need to face all these modern and often complicated choices with as much wisdom and caution as possible. Which, in many instances, includes the wise use – and easy availability -- of contraception.