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CONTRACEPTION

What is contraception?

Birth control, also known as contraception, is designed to prevent pregnancy. Birth control methods may work in a number of different ways:

Preventing sperm from getting to the eggs. Types include condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps, and contraceptive sponges. Keeping the woman's ovaries from releasing eggs that could be fertilized. Types include oral contraception like birth control pills, patches, shots, vaginal rings, and emergency contraceptive pills.

The use of intra-uterine devices (IUD); devices which are implanted into the uterus. They can be kept in place for several years. Sterilization, which is called “tubal ligation” for females and “vasectomy” for males. This permanently prevents a woman from getting pregnant or a man from being able to get a woman pregnant

the deliberate use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse. The major forms of artificial contraception are: barrier methods, of which the commonest is the condom or sheath; the contraceptive pill, which contains synthetic sex hormones which prevent ovulation in the female.

Contraception can be used to prevent pregnancy and some types will also protect you from sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

Several contraceptives used are:

I. Condoms

II. Oral contraceptive pill

III. Sterilization which includes male and female

IV. Family planning

V. IUD (Intrauterine device, coil)

VI. Contraceptive implant

VII. Contraceptive patch

VIII. Diaphragm

Some of the major contraceptives used are:

1. THE USE OF CONDOMS

The Condom

The condom is the only form of contraception that protects against most STIs as well as preventing pregnancy. This method of contraception can be used on demand, is hormone free and can easily be carried with you. And it comes in male and female varieties.

Male condoms are rolled onto an erect penis and act as a physical barrier, preventing sexual fluids from passing between people during sex. The female condom is placed into the vagina right before sex. Based on typical use, the female condom is not quite as effective as the male latex condom and it may take a little practice to get used to.

MERITS include: It’s the best protection against STIs; can be used on demand; hormone free.

DEMERITS INCLUDE: It can tear or come off during sex if not used properly; some people are allergic to latex condoms.

2. THE USE OF ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

The Oral Contraceptive Pill

It’s the little tablet taken once a day. The oral contraceptive pill is the most commonly reported method of contraception used by Australian women. There are a few different types of pill to choose from, so it’s about finding the one that’s right for you. The combined pill contains estrogen and progestin and mini pill contains only one hormone, a progestin. The pill can have many benefits, however remembering to take it on time is a must.

MERITS of taking the pill include: Highly effective when used correctly; permits sexual spontaneity and doesn’t interrupt sex; some pills may even reduce heavy and painful periods and/or may have a positive effect on acne.

DEMERITS include: Forgetting to take your pill means it won’t be as effective; it can only be used by women; is not suitable for women who can't take oestrogen-containing contraception; it does not protect against STIs.

3. THE USE OF INTRAUTERINE DEVICE

Intrauterine Device (IUD)

This small, T-shaped device is made from made of material containing progesterone hormone or plastic and copper and is fitted inside a woman’s uterus by a trained healthcare provider. It's a long-acting and reversible method of contraception, which can stay in place for three to 10 years, depending on the type.

Some IUDs contain hormones that are gradually released to prevent pregnancy. The IUD can also be an effective emergency contraception if fitted by a healthcare professional within five days (120 hours) of having unprotected sex.

IUDs containing coppers are 99% effective and the ones containing hormones are 99.8% effective, so you’re about as protected as you possibly can be by a contraceptive method.

DEMERITS: Irregular bleeding and spotting occurs in the first six months of use; requires a trained healthcare provider for insertion and removal; does not protect against STIs.

4. STERILISATION

Sterilisation is the process of completely taking away the body’s ability to reproduce through open or minimal invasion surgery. It is a permanent method of contraception, suitable for people who are sure they never want children or do not want any more children. Sterilisation is available for both women and men and is performed in a hospital with general anesthesia.

If you are thinking about sterilisation, issues to talk with your doctor about include your reasons for wanting to be sterilised, whether other methods of contraception might be more suitable and any side effects, risks and complications of the procedure.

In males, it is known as vasectomy while in females it is called tubal ligation.

Disadvantages

Vasectomy doesn’t protect against STIs

It’s difficult to reverse, and reversal may not be available on the NHS.

You need to use contraception after the operation until tests show your semen is free of sperm – if your semen contains sperm, you could make your partner pregnant.

5. DIAPHRAGM

A diaphragm is a small, soft silicon dome is placed inside the vagina to stop sperm from entering the uterus. It forms a physical barrier between the man's sperm and the woman's egg, like a condom.

The diaphragm needs to stay in place for at least six hours after sex. After six - but no longer than 24 hours after sex - it needs to be taken out and cleaned.

MERITS: You can use the same diaphragm more than once, and it can last up to two years if you look after it.

DEMERITS: Using a diaphragm can take practice and requires keeping track of the hours inserted. The diaphragm works fairly well if used correctly, but not as well as the pill, a contraceptive implant or an IUD.

Advantages and disadvantages of a diaphragm

A diaphragm has the following advantages:

• You only need to use a diaphragm when you want to have sex.

• You can put it in at a convenient time before having sex (but do not forget to use extra spermicide if you have it in for more than three hours).

• There are no serious associated health risks or side effects.

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A diaphragm has the following disadvantages:

• It is not as effective as other types of contraception.

• It only provides limited protection against STIs.

• It can take time to learn how to use it.

• Putting it in can interrupt sex.

• Cystitis (bladder infection) can be a problem for some women who use a diaphragm.

• Latex and spermicide can cause irritation in some women and their sexual partners.