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Pharmacology

PHS204

CONTRACEPTIVES

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; intrauterine devices, such as the coil, which prevent the fertilized ovum from implanting in the uterus; and male or female sterilization.

Types of contraception

1. COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES (COCS) OR “THE PILL”

Contains two hormones (estrogen and progestogen).

How it works:

Prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)

Effectiveness to prevent pregnancy:

>99% with correct and consistent use. 92% as commonly used

Comments:

Reduces risk of endometrial and ovarian cancer.

2. IMPLANTS

Small, flexible rods or capsules placed under the skin of the upper arm; contains progestogen hormone only

How it works:

Thickens cervical mucous to block sperm and egg from meeting and prevents ovulation

Effectiveness to prevent pregnancy:

>99%

Comments:

Health-care provider must insert and remove; can be used for 3–5 years depending on implant; irregular vaginal bleeding common but not harmful

3. PROGESTOGEN ONLY INJECTABLES

Injected into the muscle or under the skin every 2 or 3 months, depending on product

How it works:

Thickens cervical mucous to block sperm and egg from meeting and prevents ovulation

Effectiveness to prevent pregnancy:

>99% with correct and consistent use. 97% as commonly used

Comments:

Delayed return to fertility (about 1–4 months on the average) after use; irregular vaginal bleeding common, but not harmful.

4. INTRAUTERINE DEVICE (IUD): COPPER CONTAINING

Small flexible plastic device containing copper sleeves or wire that is inserted into the uterus

How it works:

Copper component damages sperm and prevents it from meeting the egg

Effectiveness to prevent pregnancy:

>99%

Comments:

Longer and heavier periods during first months of use are common but not harmful; can also be used as emergency contraception

MONTHLY INJECTABLES OR COMBINED INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTIVES (CIC)

Injected monthly into the muscle, contains estrogen and progestogen

How it works:

Prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)

Effectiveness to prevent pregnancy:

>99% with correct and consistent use. 97% as commonly used

Comments:

Irregular vaginal bleeding common, but not harmful

5.