

# Hope & Healing

## Birth Control Methods

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

### Introduction

We have many ways to avoid pregnancy today. Our great grandmothers had a tougher choice: no babies meant no sex.

We need to know that choices are ours, so that our decisions will be both intelligent and right for us individually.

Any birth control method has to be evaluated in three ways:

- Does it work?
- Is it safe?
- Will I like it and regularly use it?

Remember, a risk-free, 100 percent effective method doesn't exist. Each of us must match our personal needs with a suitable method and learn how to use it properly. Then, just do it.

### Birth Control Pills

The pill usually combines an estrogen and progesterone. The "minipill" contains only progesterone.

The combined form that contains an estrogen and a progesterone seldom fails. The minipill is particularly valuable for women who have diabetes or who are smokers over 35 years old. It isn't quite as effective as the combined form, has a higher chance of causing ectopic pregnancy, and may cause irregular bleeding.

#### Advantages of Birth Control Pills:

- Protects against cancer of the ovary.
- Protects against cancer of the uterus.
- Decreases the risk of cystic breast disease.

- Helps regulate the menstrual cycle.
- Makes your bones thicker and stronger.
- Reduces the chance of pelvic infection.
- Decreases the chance of anemia from menstrual blood flow.

#### Disadvantages:

- Vaginal spotting.
- Nausea.
- Rare blood clot, especially in women who smoke.
- Demands attention to the routine of a daily pill.

The birth control pill is extremely effective when compared with condoms, the vaginal sponge (Today), the cervical cap, and the diaphragm.

**Note this careful:** Every year many women forget to take their pills. Some get pregnant.

First, you must remember to take it. Then, you must take it. And, remember, the pill won't protect you against AIDS and other diseases spread through sex. This takes a condom or abstinence.

### Sterilization

Male sterilization is performed under local anesthesia in the doctor's office.

Female sterilization usually requires a day hospital or clinic admission. Performed carefully, both operations are virtually 100% effective, immediately for

women and after a few months for men.

#### For men — vasectomy.

Vasectomy is the cutting and sealing of the tubes that carry sperm from the testicles. The sperm already in the tubes, however, can still cause pregnancy, unless gotten rid of by frequent intercourse (about 20 times) or by the natural death of the sperm, which takes 3-4 months. During this time another type of birth control must be used. Before letting go of the other method, an examination of the semen must be made. If no sperm are found, the other form of birth control can be abandoned.

#### For women — tubal ligation.

The Fallopian tubes are reached through two small incisions in the abdomen. The tubes are then cut, tied, and clamped or cauterized (burned) to close the passageway that allows the egg to reach the uterus and find the sperm.

Among women who use birth control in the U.S., about 28% prefer sterilization. And, worldwide it is the most common form of birth control.

Soreness usually follows both operations for a few weeks. After the soreness clears up, sexual desire, performance, and the amount of semen should be the same as before.

**Some birth control methods have high failure rates.**

Unintended pregnancies occur frequently with the following:

- Interrupted intercourse.
- The calendar method of guessing about ovulation.
- Using spermicides alone.
- Using diaphragm with or without spermicide.
- Use of condom alone.
- Cervical cap.
- Contraceptive sponge.

Even under perfect conditions these methods are still less effective than the IUD, sterilization, Depo-Provera injections, and Norplant.

## Long-Acting Birth Control Methods \_\_\_\_\_

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### Depo-Provera

Depo-Provera is a shot given every 3 months. It is safe and it works as long as you come in for the shot.

Should you want to get pregnant, it will take 3 months to 2 years after the last shot. Like the minipill, Depo-Provera reduces the chance of cancer of the ovaries and cervix. And, the side effects are similar to the minipill, irregular periods, headache, and weight gain for some.

Depo-Provera may be a good choice if you:

- Are unable to take the pill or can't remember to take it.
- Don't mind 4 shots a year and can tolerate the side effects.
- Are sure you don't want to get pregnant for a while.

**Remember:** Norplant prevents pregnancy; it won't protect against AIDS or other diseases spread through sex.

### Intrauterine Devices (IUDs) \_\_\_\_\_

The IUD is safe and it works. And, because it costs less it is widely used worldwide.

Your doctor places the IUD in your uterus in the office without anesthesia.

Today IUDs do not cause pelvic

infections as long as you and your partner have sex only with each other.

Different IUDs last for differing time periods.

Each month you must be certain to feel for the string that tells you the IUD is still in place. About 5% fall out and unless found out, you could get pregnant. IUDs don't cause ectopic pregnancies.

You may choose an IUD if:

- You've had one child and want to wait before planning another.
- You've completed your family and don't want a tubal ligation.

### Summary \_\_\_\_\_

New methods for birth control are always under development. Choose wisely now and stay abreast of what's new. Remember: Don't risk getting AIDS, also be sure a condom is used when common sense tells you so.

## Awaken the Miracles Within You

### The Miracle of Fiber

A large scientific study reports that the risk of heart attack can be reduced by about 40% by eating 25 grams of fiber daily.

Cereals, fruits and vegetables are among the highest fiber foods with cereals having the strongest impact.

The fiber heavyweights:

1. bran cereals
2. cooked dried beans
3. prunes
4. figs
5. raisins
6. popcorn
7. oatmeal
8. pears
9. nuts
10. carrots

*The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.*