

Birth Control- an Overview

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Basics

- Remember, all methods of birth control are safer and have fewer side effects than pregnancy
- Even with perfect use, each method of birth control has a failure rate
 - still, most pregnancies are due to incorrect use of each method
 - Failure rates are usually given for both perfect and typical use
 - Failure rate- % becoming pregnant in 1st year of use
- Only condoms can reduce STD transmission
- Birth control methods can be divided into
 - Natural
 - Barrier
 - Spermicidal
 - Hormonal
 - Sterilization
- Some methods should not be used by some women because of specific medical conditions, lifestyle choices, age or use of other medications
- A nice source of information is <http://www.contracept.org/>

Natural Methods of Birth Control

- Failure rate for perfect use 0.4 – 5%, depending on method
- Failure rate for typical use 24%

- Each method's reliability is increased when combined with condoms
- Depends on fact that a woman's fertility varies through her cycle
 - The first day of bleeding is day # 1 of a new cycle
 - 95% ovulate within 4 days before or after midpoint of cycle
 - Chance of becoming pregnant (without birth control)
 - 0%: 5 days before ovulation, 11%: 4 days before ovulation
 - 26%: 1 day before ovulation, 15%: on day of ovulation
 - 9%: 1 day after ovulation, 0%: 3 days after ovulation
- See article on "Natural Methods of Birth Control"- in summary they are
 - Natural Family Planning Basal Body Temperature Charting
 - Sympto-thermal Method
 - Ovulation-mucous Method
 - Calendar Rhythm Method
 - Standard Days Method
 - Two Days Method
 - Fertility Computers
 - Breastfeeding
 - Withdrawal

Barrier Methods

- See article on "Barrier Methods of Birth Control"

- Perfect use failure rates 2 – 6%
- Typical use failure rates 12 – 21%
- Three methods
 - Male condom
 - Female condom
 - Diaphragm – less reliable in women who have had a child

Spermicidal

- Perfect use failure rates 9 – 24% (highest for sponge)
- Typical use failure rates 26 – 28% (highest for sponge)
- Failure rate decreased when combined with a barrier method
- Includes
 - Vaginal suppositories- need to allow time to dissolve
 - Foams
 - Sponge (high failure rate if previous birth)

Hormonal

- See chapter on “Birth Control Pills, Patch, Ring, Injection & Implant”
- See chapter on “IUD’s”
- Failure rates less than 1% with perfect use and 9% with typical use
 - Lowest failure rate are with those methods requiring less user effort
 - IUD, implant, injection
- Have other health benefits, for example
 - Birth control pills decrease ovarian cancer risk by 50% (5 years use)
 - All decrease cancer of the uterine lining (endometrial) in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome (chronic lack of ovulation)
- Only method shown to cause weight gain is Depo-provera (injection)
- Large variety of methods
 - Pills, vaginal rings, patch, IUDs, injection, implant

Copper IUD

- Actually, should probably be classified as spermicidal
- Perfect use failure rate 0.6%, typical use failure rate 0.8%
- Usually causes menstrual flows to become heavier

Sterilization

- See chapter on “Sterilization”
- High risk of regret if done when young
- Options include
 - Vasectomy

- Removal of fallopian tubes (may reduce ovarian cancer risk)
- Cutting or blocking fallopian tubes (tubal ligation)
- Tubal occlusion
- Vasectomy should always have follow-up sperm count
 - Failure rate 1%

- Tubal ligation
 - Failure rate 0.2-2% (depends on method)
 - Lowest when done postpartum
 - May be reversed in up to 70% of women
- Tubal occlusion
 - Failure rate 0.02% once x-ray study confirms occlusion
 - Done with scope through cervix- no incision required
 - Works by placing material into tubal canals that cause the tubes to scar and occlude
 - Not effective until at least 3 months after the procedure
 - Requires 1 month of depo-provera before procedure & a second injection 2 months after the procedure
 - Must have radiology study 3 months after procedure to confirm that both fallopian tubes are occluded
 - 5% will not be occluded until 6 months after the procedure
 - Cannot be reversed

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