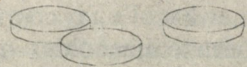


Birth Control: A Users Manual

When making the decision to become sexually active there are many factors that have to be considered. One of these factors is how you plan on preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. There are many methods of protection available. The decision made on this is based on the methods effectiveness, convenience and cost. Here is a user friendly guide to some of the methods commonly used.



The Pill

The birth control pill is a combination of low dose hormones which prevents ovulation in the female. In order for the pill to be effective it has to be taken at the same time every day. If it is missed, a backup form of contraception must be used. The Pill offers no protection from STD's and it is recommended that a condom is used with it to increase effectiveness. The Pill has a failure rate of about 2-3% and is not recommended for smokers. It costs about \$100 a year.



The Sponge

The Sponge works by trapping and absorbing sperm before it gets the chance to enter. You don't have to be specially fitted for the sponge. It is over the counter and it is recommended only for women who are comfortable enough with their bodies to be sure of proper insertion. It can be worn for up to 30 hours and is only good for one use. The sponge carries the threat of rare Toxic Shock Syndrome and can inhabit spontaneous sex. The cost is about \$3 each and the failure rate of the sponge is between 10-14%.

The Diaphragm

The diaphragm is made of rubber and fits over the opening to the cervix to block the sperm's entry. It is often used with spermicide and when used properly offers protection against both pregnancy and STD's. As with the sponge it is only suitable for women who are comfortable touching their bodies. The diaphragm needs to be fitted by a doctor and must be left in place for six hours after intercourse. The cost is about \$25 each and you shouldn't need more than one new one in a year. The failure rate of this method is between 5 and 10%.

IUD (Intrauterine Device)

The reason why the IUD works is still unclear but it is believed that the device causes a hostile environment for sperm to prevent pregnancy. What is known is that the IUD is highly effective with a failure rate of only 1-5%, and there are few negative side effects. The only warning is its tendency to slip out of place occasionally so it is important that it be checked regularly. The IUD must be inserted by a doctor and the cost of the device is about \$50.

Morning After Pill

Many people hesitate to call this method birth control, as it is designed to be used only in emergencies. The morning after pill usually consists of four pills, the first two of which must be taken within 72 hours of intercourse and the other two to be taken 12 hours later. The earlier the pill are taken the more effective they are. The morning after pill must be prescribed from a doctor and must be taken immediately for effectiveness.

Abstinence

This is the only fool proof method to preventing pregnancy and STD's and more and more people who do not feel ready for actual intercourse are finding some great substitutes which are safe for themselves and their partners.

The Condom

The condom is by far the most commonly used contraceptive, especially by young people. It is easily accessed in most stores and offers protection from both pregnancy and STD's. A condom is a thin sheath of rubber which is fitted over an erect penis. Most come with spermicide which offers additional protection. The problem with condoms is they have to be worn properly and every time which many people feel ruins the "mood". Condoms are cheap, about \$8 for a box of 12. The failure rate of Condoms used alone is about 8%.

1. Squeeze air out of the tip of the condom.

2. Hold the tip while unrolling the condom all the way down the hard penis.



3. Hold onto the rim of the condom while pulling out after sex.

