

Children are so important

That's why birth planning is so important . In fact, it's one of the most important decisions you'll ever make.

One of the important objectives of the Planned Parenthood Association of P.E.I. is to make available to you the facts that will help you make a decision. We will go out to community groups, schools and informal get-togethers. We have books, pamphlets, magazine articles and also a small lending library at your disposal. We do all this because we care. And realize it helps you acquire information you need to be a responsible person in society. And as an extension of the above, we are writing this article for The Student News.

At one time, having children was taken for granted. Now is the first time in history that it is possible to make an educated and responsible decision based not only on personal feelings but on your own socio-economic situation and your opinion of world population growth.

The following is a brief description of the various methods of birth planning and their relative effectiveness. For additional information and counselling on their use please contact your doctor or planned parenthood office at 76 B Kent Street, 892-8141. Office hours are weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Mondays and Wednesdays 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday morning 9:00 a.m. to noon.

birth control pill

This is certainly the most highly publicized and most widely used method of birth control in North America today. The reasons for this are two-fold. It is a most highly effective form of birth control - provided you remember to take the pill every day. Once established on the cycle, no other method need be used. The pill works by maintaining a high hormone level in the body which prevents the release of an egg from the ovary. Every woman has a different body chemistry and so there are pills with different amounts of hormones. All pills must be prescribed by a doctor after a thorough physical examination. The patient should be made aware of the possibility of certain side effects and these should be discussed with the doctor at the time of examination. The cost per cycle (per month) is approximately \$3.50.

diaphragm

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped flexible rubber shield. It is placed into the vagina covering the cervix thus preventing the entry of sperm into the uterus. The diaphragm should always be used with spermicidal jelly which is available from drug stores without prescription. Used without spermicidal jelly the diaphragm offers very little protection. In order to ensure proper coverage of the cervix, and comfort for the wearer, a diaphragm can only be fitted

and prescribed by a doctor. It should also be changed if a weight gain or loss of from five to ten pounds should occur. The diaphragm may be inserted an hour or so prior to intercourse and must be left in place for at least eight hours afterwards. The cost of a diaphragm is approximately \$6.75.

foams & jellies

These over-the-counter preparations are placed deep into the vagina close to the cervix by means of an applicator. These should not be confused with feminine hygiene products and care should be taken in selection. Foams and jellies, when used properly, are chemical barriers which assist in preventing sperm from entering the uterus. Also, the chemical effect of the spermicidal agent is to immobilize and kill the sperm. However if the cervix is not completely covered, or does not remain so during intercourse, this method is not an effective method of birth control. For this reason foams and jellies should never be used alone and a suggested second method of contraception is the condom.

These non-prescription preparations may be purchased from your drug store at a cost of approximately \$6.75.

sympto-thermal

This natural method is an expansion of the rhythm method. It is a combination of daily recording of your basal body temperature (using a special thermometer available from your drug store) and cross-referencing this on a chart with daily indications of change in cervical mucus. When read together on a monthly chart, the information will enable you to ascertain your fertile and infertile days. A high degree of daily self-motivation is required for this method to be effective. Also either a second mechanical means of birth control must be used during the fertile days or total and absolute abstinence at this time. The effectiveness of this natural method depends solely on the accurate recording and interpreting of the chart and on the self-discipline and motivation of the couple. It is for these reasons that conflicting evidence on the number of pregnancies occurring is found.

intrauterine device

The intrauterine device or I.U.D. is one of the oldest methods of birth control dating back as far as the first century. Some are made entirely of an inert material such as plastic and others combine plastic with either partial copper coatings or the hormone progesterone. The I.U.D. is placed directly into the uterus and a short "string" can be felt at the cervix and should be checked by the woman

weekly and at the end of each menstrual period to ensure that the I.U.D. is still in place. The I.U.D. comes in many shapes and sizes and must be inserted or removed by a doctor in all cases. The I.U.D. basically works by preventing the egg from implanting in the uterus.

Plastic I.U.D.'s may be left in place indefinitely; those containing copper must be replaced every two years and those containing progesterone, every year. I.U.D.'s constructed of plastic only are slightly less effective as a method of contraception than the other types. Like the pill, the I.U.D. allows for spontaneous sexual expression and requires no other motivation except checking to see that it is in place. The only cost involved is the initial purchase price, averaging \$8.00.

condom

The condom is a thin protective sheath which is unrolled over the head of the erect penis. Condoms act as a barrier preventing sperm from coming into contact either with an egg or with the woman's external organs as even the slightest unprotected genital contact may result in pregnancy. The contraceptive effectiveness of the condom may be increased by the use of vaginal foam. Condoms come in many new shapes, colors, and forms of lubrication are available without prescription from drug stores. The cost ranges from \$1.00 for three to approximately \$5.00 per dozen.

An accepted way of learning this method is by using "teaching couples". There are two such couples on the Island, Edie and Paul Creighan 892-2970 and Calade and Julie Parent 892-9205.

sterilization

Depending on your decision to have children you may also wish to consider sterilization as a permanent alternative. The operation for the woman is called tubal ligation. Basically the structure of the fallopian tubes is altered surgically so that an egg cannot travel down the tube and into the uterus and pregnancy does not occur.

The operation for the man is called vasectomy. This involves a surgical interruption of the transport of sperm. Therefore no sperm are released in the seminal fluid upon ejaculation. Both procedures require a doctor and tubal ligation may necessitate a brief hospital stay. A vasectomy may be done in the doctor's office.

Although medical science is advancing every day, persons considering sterilization should do so with the knowledge that it is, at present, being used as a permanent procedure.

failure rates

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| Birth control pill | 0.5 percent |
| I.U.D. | 1.5-8 |
| Condom | 10-15 |
| Diaphragm (with contraceptive jelly) | 10-15 |