

What You Should Know About the Pill (Part Two)

By Dr. Tasleem Kassam, BSc, ND

Last month's newsletter was a discussion about the common use of synthetic hormones, more commonly referred to as the Birth Control Pill, and its effects on a woman's health and well-being. There are many reasons the Pill is recommended by the medical community—from "regulating" one's cycle, alleviating acne, and mostly for contraceptive purposes. Many women are on the Pill simply because they are unaware of safer options available. This article aims to outline the many methods available to men and women without the use of synthetic hormones.

Contraceptive methods and devices fall into different categories, as follows:

- **Hormonal methods** come in the form of pills, injections, patches and a vaginal ring. They work by preventing the release of the egg. They are by far, the worst choice in contraception, from a whole health perspective.
- **Barrier methods** include male and female condoms, the diaphragm, the cervical cap and contraceptive sponge. They work by preventing the sperm from reaching the egg. When used correctly, the diaphragm boasts a 96% effectiveness rate, whereas condoms are 98% effective (the Pill is considered to be 99% effective in preventing pregnancy). Condoms containing spermicide are shown to be no more effective than non-spermicidal condoms and are not recommended.



- **Spermicides** come in the form of foam, jelly, cream, film and suppositories. They contain chemicals that kill/disable sperm before reaching the egg. They are not well suited for individuals with chemical sensitivities, and they also kill beneficial bacteria in the vagina, leaving the woman more susceptible to urinary tract infections and yeast infections. They are toxic and therefore, not recommended.



- **Intrauterine Devices**, commonly referred to as IUDs, are available in two forms, non-hormonal and hormonal. An IUD is a small, T-shaped object that is placed inside the uterus to prevent sperm from joining with an egg. It does this by obstructing sperm and by changing the lining of the uterus. The non-hormonal IUD, in my opinion, is the best option for many people. It has no influence on a woman's natural cycle. Newer designs have decreased the risk of pelvic inflammatory disease, once associated with the use of this device. They are 99.9% effective and do require insertion by a qualified medical doctor. For those of you without general practitioners, this service (and others pertaining to women's health issues) is provided by Northeast Calgary Women's Clinic. See www.newwomensclinic.com for more details.

For reasons discussed previously, I do not recommend the use of hormonal IUDs, or any synthetic hormonal delivery system.

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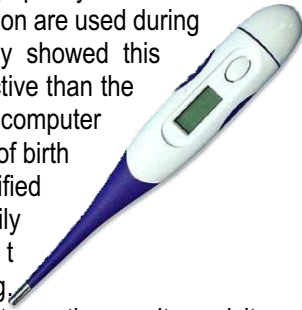
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- **Natural Family Planning**, also called the symptothermal method, uses various physiological clues such as changes in cervical mucus and temperature to determine when a woman is fertile in the month, a duration of 5-6 days per cycle. Abstinence and/or alternate methods of contraception are used during the woman's fertile time. One study showed this method to be at least, if not more effective than the Pill in preventing pregnancy. New computer fertility monitors will make this method of birth control even easier to use. A qualified accredited instructor of natural family planning can be found at www.billingsnaturalfamilyplanning.org. For more information on fertility and contraception monitors, visit www.healthybirthcontrol.com. - these items are available through Effective Health Solutions.



One drawback is that these methods are really only effective for women with regular cycles. They should not be relied upon for the first 2-3 months after coming off the Pill or for irregular cycles. It is best for persons interested in this method to receive formal instruction. It is, by far, the most healthy choice in contraceptive methods.

- **Sterilization** is a permanent option for people who are certain that they are not having any more children. In women, it is called tubal ligation where the Fallopian tubes are clipped via laparoscopic surgery under general anaesthetic. There is some evidence that it may, over time, decrease a woman's production of progesterone, which can cause symptoms similar to PMS and uterine fibroids. It is possible to reverse these symptoms with the use of a natural bio-identical hormone cream.

For men, vasectomy is a minor in office surgical procedure where the tubes that transport the sperm are cut, thereby making it impossible for the sperm to reach the penis. There are complications for this procedure. It is estimated that within one year of vasectomy, 60-70% of men develop antibodies to their own sperm, which can lead to other health issues, from local inflammation (epididymitis), to the development of local granulomas (benign lumps). There is some evidence that it may lead to a form of dementia called primary progressive aphasia (PPA), which can be mistaken for Alzheimer's.



In many Western countries, many women use the Pill simply because they are unaware of any other choice. The aim of this article is to educate you on making the best health decisions possible, based on solid unbiased knowledge. There are so many reasons to choose an alternative method of contraception, your long term health being the one of primary importance. Hopefully, this information has made it easier to find the one that is right for you.

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It's a Boy!



Our heartfelt congratulations goes out to Shann Ross, our homeopath who delivered a healthy baby boy on Monday, March 29, 2010.