



Contraceptive Choices for Women

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If you will be having intercourse regularly then the contraceptive decisions can be shared. However, you must always remember that most contraceptive measures do not provide protection from STD's (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). You can use condoms to protect yourself from most STD infections upto 95%. These days condoms are available for both men and women.

Choosing a contraceptive method or device depends on several factors like the person's involved, their age, their health history, budget and various other personal or convenient reasons.

Surgical Method

At first you must understand that there are permanent contraceptives like surgeries called Sterilizations. You must decide to undergo this only if you have children and do not want to have any more hereafter. Sterilization is irreversible. It has no side effects and is very easily done. It is done by either clipping the fallopian tubes or removing pieces of the tubes so that the eggs do not reach the uterus. This is usually done using a Laproscope by a gynecologist under anesthesia. You will fully recover within a few days. This method does not affect your sexual activity or does not cause any hormonal imbalances. Small cuts are made in the abdomen and the fallopian tubes are either tied up or clipped with surgical instruments. It is relatively a easy and quick procedure and Offers a life long contraception for female.

Mechanical Method

If a woman decides to have children in the future then she can go for Intra Uterine devices called IUD's. In India they are more commonly called Copper T's. This is a T shaped copper structure made of copper wire and is inserted in the uterus by your gynecologist. It requires no surgery and is done in the clinic in about 15- 20 minutes. The T – shaped structure sits in your uterus and it can last up to 5 years these days. Copper usually kills the sperms when they come in contact with the IUD. Alternatively, the IUD in position does not allow the fertilized eggs to implant in the uterus too. This is relatively a cheaper and reversible contraceptive. But it is better to have it inserted after you have

at least one child though not necessarily. You might experience a light cramping in your legs while the doctor inserts it. After an hour or so you will be back to normal. It does not interfere with your monthly periods. There will be a thread hanging out of the copper T through your cervix. Don't worry if you cannot see or feel it. When you want the IUD to be removed you can ask your doctor to just pull it off. This is not painful either. This mechanical method is best for women who forget to

take the hormonal pills on time which will be discussed next.

Hormonal Method

This method is to take certain pills that contain the hormones estrogen and progestin. They are usually taken daily for 21 days followed by a one week, no pill week (7 days). This no pill week is the time you will have your monthly periods. So after these 7 days that is on the 29th day you will again start taking the contraceptive pills. The main thing here is, you have to remember to take the pill daily and on the same time of the day. If you alter the timings by more than 3 hours differences (later), the efficacy of the contraception is reduced. These pills are safe to use if you don't have a history of blood clotting and if you are not obese since these pills alter your hormonal levels. Recently, hormonal injections are in the market and have to be taken once in 3 months. These are slightly expensive but if you are very forgetful in taking the pills on time this is better option. Also a new type of IUD with hormones is implanted in the uterus which has the same effect and can last up to 5 years.

Barrier Method

This is the far simplest contraception and requires no fore planning. You can use female condoms, cervical caps and diaphragms to prevent the sperms from reaching your eggs. A diaphragm is something that you will have to coat it with a cream or spermicidal which kills the sperms when it touches the diaphragm. This diaphragm is inserted into the cervix and you can remove it after 6 hours after you have had intercourse. The diaphragm can be washed and used later again. Remember to apply the spermicidal cream when inserting it again in your vagina. This is still not very commonly available and it requires a little practice but is relatively simple and an instant contraceptive for women.

Natural Methods

The last topic I would like to touch on contraceptives for women is the natural method of preventing it without any one of the above methods. It does not cost you anything, is safe and relatively easy. For this you must understand how the female reproductive cycle works and the time period you

ovulate every month. This can be studied by monitoring the changes in your basal body temperature and cervical mucus. Basal Body temperature is the temperature at the time you wake up. Keep a thermometer besides you daily and note the temperature first thing in the morning. The temperature will be the same every day, but on the day of ovulation, that is your most fertile period and thereafter the temperature will be slightly higher until your next period day. There are plenty of graphing charts on the web, if you make a graph you can easily see when your most fertile days are. This is also the best way to see when you are most fertile to get pregnant. Secondly, the thick white discharge from your vagina will be much higher in volume and will be like clear, sticky egg whites during the fertile days which are approximately 12-18 days from your last period. If you don't have intercourse during these days you can prevent yourself from Getting pregnant.

Caution: For this method you must have a regular cycle every month, if your cycle is haphazard you might not be able to find out when you are ovulating to prevent unwanted pregnancies.