

Non-contraceptive Benefits of the Pill

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The Human Production Update published by the European Society of Human Production and Embryology says that oral contraception is an "extremely effective method of contraception that also confers health benefits beyond pregnancy prevention." The report goes on to say that "notable effects on the reproductive system include relief from trouble some symptoms associated with menstruation, acne, long lasting reduction in the risk of developing [ovary and endometrial] cancer."

Some of the non-contraceptive benefits of the pill as presented by the European Society of Human Production and Embryology.

Dysmenorrheal

According to a study done for the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* by doctors Andersch and Milson, dysmenorrheal is a condition that affects 50 to 90 percent of women. The menstrual disorder which causes significant pain during periods can cause monthly absenteeism from work or school. Studies in the US show that this condition can cost two billion dollars in lost productivity every year in the United States. In the UK, 26 per 100,000 women are hospitalized for dysmenorrheal every year.

The pain is caused by the release of prostaglandins which cause the uterus to contract. Combination oral contraceptives reduce the release of menstrual prostaglandins and produce effective pain relieve in 70 to 80 percent of the women who take it.

Menorrhagia

Menorrhagia is menstrual blood loss of greater than 80 milliliters. This excessive blood loss can lead to iron deficiency and can increase the necessity of a hysterectomy. In the UK 267 women out of 100,000 women every year are hospitalized for menorrhagia. Statistically, approximately 10 percent of women suffer from the condition worldwide, according to the European Society of Human Production and Embryology.

Low dose combination oral contraceptives decreased average blood loss to between 36.5 milliliters to 33.7 milliliters according to several British and Australian studies. It took approximately three to six months to enjoy the benefits.

Progestin-only pills, also called mini pills, are also effective in treating menorrhagia because they can reduce the number of annual menstruations.

Acne

Acne affects 40 percent of teenagers and approximately 10 percent of adult women. It can mild, moderate or severe. Combination oral contraceptives can treat acne because they contain anti-androgens which reduce the severity and numbers of lesions. Generally the combination birth control pills with higher estrogen tended to be more effective at treating acne. Oral contraceptives can be a more skin-friendly acne treatment compared to topical retinoids.

Benign Breast Disease

A 1999 study published by the US National Library of Medicine shows that the use of oral contraceptives reduces the risk of benign breast disease. Benign breast disease, also referred to by the acronym BBD, is a confusing and general term used to describe a variety of breast tissue disorders. There is no internationally agreed classification of these breast disorders, according to the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology.

Many studies suggest that oral contraceptives help reduce fibrocystic disease and fibroadenoma, two major conditions that dominate literature on BBD. These conditions cause palpable lumps in the breasts that are painful and tender and can fluctuate in size and intensity with menstrual cycles. Fibroadenomas are more common in women in their early 40s while fibrocystic disease is more common in younger women between the ages of 20- and 25-years-old.

Fibroids

A 1988 case-control study called *Epidemiologic Characteristics of Women with Uterine Fibroids* published by Elsevier Science Inc. suggests that oral contraceptives can help reduce the risk of fibroids. The study was limited to women who had surgical confirmation of fibroids, but the study acted as a catalyst for other studies into the connection between fibroid risk and birth control pills. Additional studies have conflicting results. Some indicate there is no clear association between the two while other studies saying there is a weak association and still other studies suggest that women who use the birth control pill have a "low prevalence of ultrasound detected fibroids." No study suggested that oral contraceptives increased the likelihood of fibroids.

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