



## **The Pill and Other Contraceptives**

### **Dr Deepa Daniel 18/05/10**

The Pill was first approved for contraceptive use in the United States in May 1960. But it wasn't until 1961 that Aussie women got the Pill. It's just one of many popular forms of contraception used by Aussie women.

#### **Combined pill**

This is made up of the synthetic forms of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. The combined pill prevents ovulation, thickens cervical mucus to make it harder for sperm to enter the uterus and changes the lining of the uterus to make it less suitable for a fertilised egg to stick.

There are many types of combined pills with different dose and hormone combinations. Generally this form of contraception is not recommended for women who are at risk of heart disease, such as smokers aged over 35 years

#### **Mini pill**

This contains only the synthetic form of progesterone. It makes the cervical mucus thicker, which prevents sperm from entering the uterus. This pill must be taken every day at the same time and is not as effective as the combined pill. It is usually suitable for women who either experience side effects from oestrogen or shouldn't take it for health reasons.

#### **Diaphragm**

This is a soft, shallow rubber dome that fits in the vagina, covers the cervix and stops sperm from entering the uterus. The diaphragm must stay in place for at least six hours after intercourse and is 85–95 per cent effective if used, fitted and positioned correctly. Diaphragms must be fitted by a suitably trained doctor or nurse. They may decrease the risk of STIs, but should not be relied on for this.

#### **Intrauterine devices (IUD)**

An IUD, sometimes known as a coil, is a small plastic device with either added copper or hormones (Mirena). It is inserted into your uterus by a doctor. It can stay in the uterus for five to eight years, depending on the type used, and can easily be removed before that if you would like to fall pregnant or are having problems.

#### **Implanon**

This is a hormone implant that is inserted under the skin at the inner side of the upper arm. It contains etonogestrel, a progesterone-like hormone that prevents ovulation and hinders sperm from entering the cervix (by changing cervical mucus). Implanon lasts for three years, is close to 100 per cent effective and is suitable for most women who can't tolerate synthetic oestrogens. The device is inserted by a doctor under local anaesthetic.

**DPMA injections (Depo-Provera/Depo-Ralovera)**

These are long-acting (12 to 14 weeks) injectable contraceptives containing the hormone progestogen. They prevent ovulation, block sperm by thickening the mucus made by the cervix and cause changes in the lining of the uterus so it is unsuitable for a fertilised egg to stick. DPMA injections are highly effective and provide a very private method of contraception.

(Source: Victorian Government's Better Health website)