

# Considering contraception

For centuries man has been trying to find ways to deal with the challenge of preventing pregnancy. Today the choices are wider and more effective than ever before. And considering that if 100 sexually active women don't use any contraception 80 to 90 of them will become pregnant in a year, this is very good news for many of us.

I bring up this interesting subject because a year ago I invested in a new division for the company – Durbin Clinic Sales. We sell every type of contraceptive imaginable to healthcare professionals (GPs and family planning clinics) and, over the past 12 months, my learning curve about the contraceptive market has been steep. I'd never realised quite how fascinating this area is and I'd like to share some of my acquired knowledge with you.

An increasingly popular group of contraceptives has been termed 'methods with no user failure'. These include the contraceptive injection, implant, intrauterine system (IUS), intrauterine device (IUD) and male and female sterilisation. They are categorised in this way because they do not depend on the user remembering to take or use them. They are long-term methods and extremely reli-

By Leslie Morgan

able – over and around 99% effective.

The contraceptive injection works by releasing the hormone progesterone slowly into the body which stops ovulation, thickens cervical mucus to prevent sperm meeting an egg and thins the lining of the womb to prevent an egg implanting. It lasts for eight to 12 weeks, depending on the chosen brand.

The implant is a 40-millimetres flexible tube that's inserted under the skin using a local anaesthetic. It also releases the hormone progesterone slowly into the body to stop ovulation, thicken cervical mucus to prevent sperm meeting an egg and thins the lining of the womb to prevent an egg implanting. It can stay in place for three years or be removed at any time.

The IUS is small plastic device that's fitted into the womb where it also releases the hormone progesterone slowly into the body, having the same effect as the other devices mentioned above. It can remain in place for five years, or be taken out at any time.

The IUD is a small plastic and copper device that's also



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fitted into the womb. This method works by stopping the sperm meeting an egg and stopping an egg implanting in the womb. Depending on the brand, it can stay in place for three to 10 years or be removed at any time.

Sterilisation: there's the choice of male vasectomy or female sterilisation. Both are simple and relatively quick operations. In women, the fallopian tubes and, in men, the tubes carrying the sperm (vas deferens) are cut or blocked to prevent sperm reaching an egg. Both methods are permanent with

no long- or short-term serious side-effects.

Some of these products may not be available worldwide yet, but as a healthcare professional it's got to be useful to be aware of what the future may bring – and that's not even taking into account what the research scientists are inventing in their labs as I write... ■



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Durbin PLC is a British company based in South Harrow, London. Established in 1963, the company specialises in supplying quality assured pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and consumable supplies to healthcare professionals and aid agencies in over 140 countries. As well as reacting rapidly to emergency situations, Durbin PLC responds to healthcare supply needs from local project level to national scale programmes. Web address: [www.durbin.co.uk](http://www.durbin.co.uk)  
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