Current contraceptive choices for men? [1]

Dear Alice,

What about male contraceptives?

Dear Equal responsibility

Answer

Many men would like to take on equal responsibility for contraception; unfortunately, the list of currently available contraceptive options is significantly smaller for men than for women. Male-directed methods of birth control include male condoms, vasectomy, and withdrawal (a.k.a. "pulling out"). A few points to consider about each method:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condoms</strong> (latex, polyurethane, or polyisoprene sheaths that fit over the erect penis)</td>
<td>98 percent effective when used correctly, <em>every time</em></td>
<td>Some men find condoms uncomfortable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Helps to reduce risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)</td>
<td>Must be put on during sex (although this 'con' can become a 'pro' if you get your partner involved and turn it into foreplay!)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inexpensive, widely available</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Many varieties, sizes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vasectomy</strong> (surgery to cut the vas deferens, the tube that sperm travel through)</td>
<td>Over 99 percent effective</td>
<td>Not easily reversible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Permanent, no need to think about birth control in the heat of the moment</td>
<td>Requires surgery, potentially expensive</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No STI protection</td>
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</table>
Withdrawal (when a man pulls out of his partner's vagina before ejaculating)

Always available and free
Up to 96 percent effective with perfect use (meaning he pulls out before ejaculating, *every time*)

Approximately 22 percent failure rate with typical use
No STI protection
Have to pull out before climax, *every time*

Based on this information, you can see that a man who wants to retain his fertility and use a more reliable method of birth control may determine he is best served by condoms (condoms are also the only available method that protect against STIs). At the moment, other birth control options involve cooperating with a female partner in the use of condoms, hormonal methods, fertility awareness, and/or non-hormonal methods like an IUD or diaphragm. For more information about female-directed methods check out the *Go Ask Alice! Contraception* [2] category.

A number of new male-directed methods are currently in clinical trials in the United States and other countries; however it will likely be a few years before any are on the market. In the meantime, men and women who would like to prevent pregnancy can work with their partner(s) to identify the best method(s) for them and to share any associated costs.

Alice!
Category:
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Contraception [4]
Other Hormonal Options & Choices [5]
Non-hormonal Options & Choices [6]

Related questions

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