

Headline	The family plan		
MediaTitle	Sunday Star		
Date	02 Oct 2011	Color	Full Color
Section	StarMag FitForLife	Circulation	320,964
Page No	6	Readership	1,072,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	599 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 22,416
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	RM 67,248



The family plan

Talk contraception if you care for your partner.

By Dr K. NAYAR

CONTRACEPTION is a form of birth control. It helps reduce the risk of having an unintended pregnancy. So as long as you're sexually active and are not ready to have a baby, you should be using some form of contraception – the more effective the method, the better.

There are contraceptive methods in the market, but some of the more effective and commonly used ones include barrier methods, such as condoms or diaphragm; hormonal and non-hormonal intrauterine devices; hormonal implants; and the oral contraceptive pill.

The combined oral contraceptive pill is often referred to as the birth-control pill, or "the Pill".

Your choice of birth control method should be based on your age, gender, health profile, stage in life and lifestyle. Your healthcare professional would be able to help advise you and your partner on this matter.

Despite the many contraceptive methods available to couples today, unintended pregnancies remain on the rise. In fact, about 41% of the 208 million pregnancies which occur worldwide each year are unintended. This is a major global concern, particularly as it involves young people.

As we mark World Contraception Day for the fifth consecutive year, we continue our quest to improve Malaysian's awareness of contraception to enable more people to make informed decisions on their sexual and reproductive health.

Young people have the right to accurate, unbiased information about contraception. Only when they are equipped with information are they able to protect themselves against unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

However, just being armed with information on sexual health and contraception is not enough. Couples need to talk to each other about contraception. How else would we be able to start addressing the incidence of unintended pregnancies, abortions, STD and the like, each of which are possible real life situations, that can have long term consequences?

Contraception is a basic and vital healthcare necessity for every couple, including those who want to have children. It is a

shared responsibility because both partners are responsible if an unintended pregnancy occurs. Just because most contraceptives are designed for use by women doesn't mean that birth control is the sole responsibility of women.

So, if you haven't already done so, I encourage you to speak up and acknowledge each other's sexuality by discussing contraception.

Many of us are embarrassed or may feel awkward in discussing contraception prior to sex. But if you truly cared for each other,

wouldn't you want to protect him or her? In fact, if you are not able to discuss the subject of contraception with your partner, ask yourself if you are really ready to be sexually intimate with him or her. If your concern is that you may spoil the "mood" and "spontaneity", get such details taken care of early on.

With a new partner, wearing a condom is often the minimum standard of protection. But as the relationship matures, you may want to discuss birth control methods together as you now have a better idea of ascertaining what you both feel comfortable with.

You should also revisit the topic and explore what other methods of contraception would suit your changing needs as you enter a different stage in life and start planning for your family. For instance, the combined oral contraceptive pill will enable you to space your children, or if you are not sure you have completed your family, then you could opt for a long term contraceptive such as the intra-uterine system.

Talking about birth control may be difficult, but it is important to make these decisions together, especially if you are in a serious relationship. Here are some tips to help make this discussion as relaxed and productive as possible.

Prepare yourself

Do your research on the various available contraceptive methods. You may want to discuss this either with your doctor or someone who has had more experience with contraception and whom you are comfortable with. Once you have a better idea of one or two possible methods that may suit you and your partner, do some further research to find out more about them.

Prepare for the 'Talk'

It is better to mentally talk yourself through a conversation. Prepare your opening lines and potential responses to any objections your partner might bring up. Be prepared to begin the conversation before any sexual encounter.

To make this conversation less stressful,

Headline	The family plan		
MediaTitle	Sunday Star		
Date	02 Oct 2011	Color	Full Color
Section	StarMag FitForLife	Circulation	320,964
Page No	6	Readership	1,072,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	599 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 22,416
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	RM 67,248

choose an occasion where there is privacy and ample time. Perhaps taking a walk might help create a suitable opportunity as you would be able to talk without having to make any eye contact.

Topics to discuss

- Why is birth control so important? The more your partner and you know about the contraceptive method you choose, the more likely you will both take some responsibility to make it work. Emphasise on the responsibilities of being a parent and whether you are ready to take any risk.

- Talk about the pleasure. Explain to your partner that when you are both feeling protected, sexual intimacy can be more relaxed and enjoyable. Having this talk should not ruin things between the two of you, yet not having it can affect your lives forever should an unintended pregnancy occur.

- Discuss your relationship. How exclusive are you both towards this relationship?

It is good to discuss your sexual histories and whether or not either of you have ever been exposed to STD. By discovering more about your relationship, this will in turn help you both decide on the most suitable contraceptive method.

- Discuss and share knowledge about the various birth control methods available. If you have already made your decision, you may wish to discuss and explain your choice with your partner. It is always better to make a decision together – weighing the pros and cons of each method and settling on a method that you both feel comfortable with.

Having this discussion and sharing

your questions with each other can help bring you closer as a couple. Even if the two of you cannot agree upon a method, then agree to discuss it again after doing more research and giving it more thought.

- Talk about “what if”. It is important to discuss what you would do if your birth control failed. Should a pregnancy occur, both your partner and you should be in agreement in accepting the consequences and responsibilities.

Having this discussion ahead of time will make it a little more comforting in the event that your contraceptive fails you.

Margaret Higgins, the 20th century birth control activist, once said: “No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother”.

It doesn't matter how different our likes and preferences are, deep inside we're all human beings, we're all the same, we share the same needs, the same dreams, the same desires and hopes, even the same fears.

This World Contraception Day, know your rights, live your life, and discuss contraception with your partner today.

■ This article is contributed by Dr K. Nayar, medical advisor with Bayer HealthCare. This information is provided for educational purposes only and should not be taken in place of a consultation with your doctor. Bayer HealthCare disclaims any and all liability for injury or other damages that could result from use of the information obtained from this article.



It is important to discuss what you would do if your birth control failed. Should a pregnancy occur, both your partner and you should be in agreement in accepting the consequences and responsibilities.