

Contraception

Contraception is an important need of women. It is enshrined in the WHO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that calls on countries “by 2030, to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning. (Target 3.7)”

There are many methods of contraception available right from the conservative methods to the more advanced methods available. This also includes temporary and permanent methods of contraception/sterilisation. The efficacy of method is expressed as the Pearl Index (pregnancies/ 100 Woman Years).

Patients may practice different type of non-hormonal and non-mechanical methods such as rhythm method, coitus interruptus (withdrawal), temperature/ovulation methods. However, these methods have a high failure rate.

As medical practitioners, we have to take a full history as well and consider the wishes of the woman before advising the most appropriate contraceptive for that woman. This could be regarding the duration of planning either short term or long term as well as preference of methods.

The contraceptive methods that can be advised for conservative non hormonal mechanical methods include the condoms both male and female, vaginal diaphragm (better with spermicide cream).

Hormonal methods can include combined contraceptive pills (Estrogen and progestogen) and progestogen only pills. The hormones could also be delivered via depo injection of long-acting progesterone, combined hormone containing vaginal device such as ring devices. There are progesterone devices that can be implanted subcutaneously (Implanon) or coated onto an IUCD (Mirena).

For non-hormonal device, is the IUCD that is inserted in the endometrial cavity. It is usually used for long term contraception between 3 to 5 years,

Permanent methods can be divided into male and female. The vasectomy is performed on males. On women the common procedure is tubal ligation. This can be carried out via a small laparotomy incision or during Caesarean section. This is more commonly performed via laparoscopy with various techniques.

In conclusion contraception is a very essential part of healthcare aspect to protect the wellbeing and health of women worldwide.

Assoc Prof Dr Sivakumar S Balakrishnan