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We often think about the different types of birth control that are on the market today. Oddly enough many of us do not look at the historical background to these devices but imagine that they are products of the twentieth century.

For example, let us look at the development of two birth control methods: the IUD (Intra Uterine Device) and the Condom. The IUD has been written about as far back as the time of Hippocrates the renowned Greek Physician. He wrote about inserting a hollow lead tube into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. He probably developed his idea from travellers making long trips across the desert. The travelers would insert a small stone into the uterus of the female camels. Today's IUD, a small piece of plastic that sits in the uterus (or womb), works on the same basis: that a foreign object placed within the uterine cavity will usually prevent pregnancy.

Except for spiders, sealing wax and various witches brews, the condom is just about the oldest method of contraception known to man. The invention of the condom has been attributed to a Dr. Condom who resided in the court of Charles II. It is said that Charles II, who was getting a little alarmed at the high cost of his illegitimate brood, was so delighted with Dr. Condom's miraculous little invention that

he knighted the doctor in appreciation of his service to the Crown. There is evidence, however, that this story is fanciful and that condoms were around long before the reign of Charles II. The earliest recorded description was that of Fallapio, an Italian scientist, who, in 1564, recommended a linen sheath moistened with a lotion as a guard against venereal disease.

Despite the instant success of Fallapio's invention, it wasn't till the 18th century that people began to realize that the condom could also be used to guard against pregnancy.

The early condoms were made from sheep membrane and were so expensive that only the upper classes could afford them. With the vulcanization of rubber, there was a great effect on the world's sexual relations. This lowered the price of the item and made it more accessible to the average family. The next advance came with the development of latex in the 1930's which made condoms even cheaper and easier to manufacture. Since then even greater research has been done in the areas of comfort and sensitivity. If you should have any questions about these two birth control products or any of the others that are available, please drop by Harbinger Community Services in Room 026/027 McLaughlin College and we will be most happy to answer any enquiries.

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