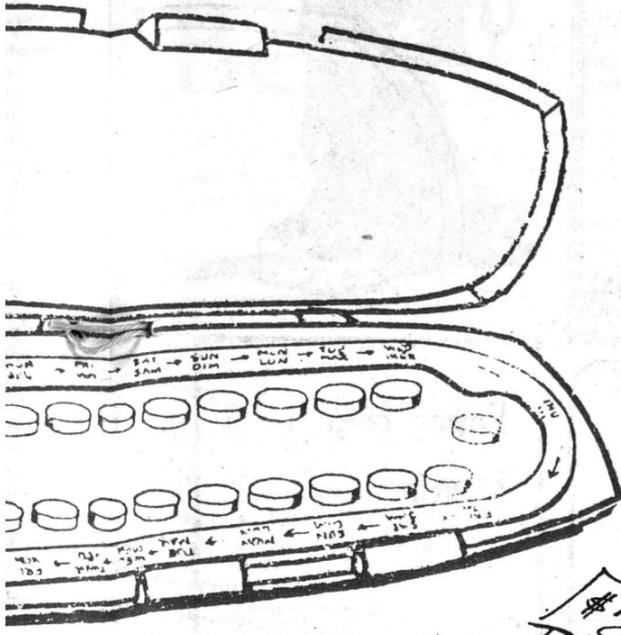


are still controversial



The stronger types of pills inhibit ovulation.

Dr. Coll says the lower dosage the safer the pill is. The lower dosage pills have to be taken regularly every 24 hours or their effectiveness is reduced. Anne Marie Smart says while the mini-pill may be safer it is still putting estrogen into the system. The risk of a variety of unpleasant side effects still exists.

"It's up to the individual to look at the information, examine the risks and decide if it is worthwhile for her to take the pill," says Smart. "It's easier for doctors to give the pill than to teach another birth control method. I'm not blaming doctors. Ultimately it is the woman's responsibility."

Dr. Coll says it is the responsibility of the physician to screen patients well. "In the 18 to 24 age group, 85 percent of patients can take the pill but they still have to give a complete family history and have an internal physical before we give them a prescription. There has been a tremendous amount of research done on the pill and most of it indicates it is tremendously safe. If you stress the side effects, no one will take the pill."

Anne Marie Smart doesn't think anyone should use the pill. There are other methods, she says, which should be looked into. For example, she cites

cervical caps, which are widely used in Europe but rare in North America.

Basically, a cervical cap is similar to a diaphragm but it is smaller. The cap fits snugly around the cervix and is more effective. Smart says cervical caps aren't easily available in North America. She blames this both on drug companies who lobby against the cervical cap and on women who don't demand it. "The pill is so popular," she says, "women have been spoiled by the simplicity of the pill and it is difficult for them to adapt to other, less invisible methods."

Research is being done on new methods of birth control but prospects for the foreseeable future look bleak. The already infamous pill for men is in the research stages still, and more is known about it now than was known about the pill before it was mass-marketed.

The World Health Organization gave \$300,000 to a Chinese herbalist to do research on a contraceptive tea. There may one day be solutions to the birth control puzzle but their effectiveness has yet to be proven.

It seems that the effectiveness of the pill is also coming under fire. Theoretically, there is a pregnancy rate of 5 percent among pill users. But in actual use they show a failure rate of 2 to 5 percent.

Pregnancy can occur if you forget to

take your pill for two or three days, if you try to juggle your pill schedule, if you don't use a back-up method of birth control on your first two weeks on the pill and occasionally when you change from one brand of pills to another. Recent research has also shown that some types of drugs may interfere with the effectiveness of the pill.

Another recent realization is that the pill is best only for women in their late teens through their late twenties. After this, the risk of side effects increases considerably. However, authorities still disagree on how long a woman should stay on the pill. Some studies, like those cited in *Out Bodies, Ourselves* by the Boston Women's Health Book collective, indicate that women should go off the pill for 2 or 3 months every 3 or 4 years.

But Dr. Coll disagrees. "If you are a non-smoker and young, it is probably okay to take the pill for as long as five years. You should then go off for a year so the cycles can get regular again."

Smart stresses necessity of being informed. "Who knows the long-term effects of the pill," she says. "Where are the studies on prolonged use, on early use? I wouldn't recommend the pill to anyone, but if they are going to use it, they should be aware of what they are getting into. They should demand information."

associated with reduced over is appeared. The so-called "mini-pill" which introduced it of sy-ormoi that time, 5 milligrams of these hormones was the norm. Now most pills contain 50 micrograms. The so-called "mini-pill" which contains 50 micrograms of estrogen or less, build up a mucus over the cervix so that sperm may not enter.

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