

In preventing conception these devices are unreliable, as a skilled hand is required to place them in proper position. Their supposed efficacy is enhanced by the fact that they are used by individuals whose intercourse is sterile, from occluded tubes, endometritis, epididymitis, or prostatitis. But these considerations are of only individual interest. The fact that these devices may be dangerous to both parties gives the subject a general medical interest.

The occlusive pessaries used in preventing conception consist of a rubber ring with a central diaphragm, the latter modified in various ways, or the whole pessary is formed of soft rubber, in the form of a cap with a thickened rim, the latter firmly grasping the cervix. As a rule such pessaries are inserted after the menstrual period and left in position until the next menstrual flow. This practice is a menace to the health of both sexes. Gynecologists know that certain vaginas do not tolerate soft rubber; it causes an intense congestion with profuse secretion.

Pathogenic germs are always present in the vagina, but their virulence and viability are greatly reduced. A change in the environment alters their virulence; in a few generations they may become so virulent as to excite an inflammation which varies in character with the germ. A copious catarrhal secretion may undergo decomposition when retained and awake the potential virulence of these germs. Such an altered secretion may infect the male urethra, or cause an ascending inflammation of the female pelvic organs. Such cases have been observed in which gonorrhoeal infection could be certainly excluded. I append a few cases which support these views.

The wife of a physician married for eight years had borne three healthy children, when one of the above-mentioned contrivances was used. The husband, perfectly familiar with the modern professional views concerning gonorrhoea, and aware of the importance of truth in this matter, emphatically denied ever having had any infection. He willingly submitted to all kinds of examinations, which proved the truth of his statements. I had occasion to examine the wife repeatedly and carefully, as I conducted all the confinements. Never up to the time of the above-mentioned incident was there any infection. The soft-rubber cap was introduced after menstruation and kept there until the next period, and daily irrigations were used. In the second month of the use of the pessary the wife noticed a rather offensive discharge, while pain in her right side set in. Shortly afterward the husband appeared in my office very