

Responsibilities of Contraceptives Should be Placed on Males

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*Editor's Note: This essay was composed prior to the Supreme Court overturning Roe vs. Wade.

Why are women responsible for not getting pregnant when it is men who impregnate them? Over half of the population of women use a contraceptive because there currently isn't an easy option for men to use them instead of women. According to Kimberly Daniels and Joyce Abma of the CDC (2018), "in 2015–2017, 64.9% of the 72.2 million women aged 15–49 in the United States were currently using contraception." Even with this percentage, researcher Krystale Littlejohn states that "recent estimates show that 49 percent of pregnancies in the United States were unintended in 2006, a figure that is nearly unchanged from the 48 percent of pregnancies that were unintended in 2001." This shows that contraceptive doesn't work for all women, and it isn't always easy to get birth control anyway. Not only can it be difficult to get but if it does fail, many states are instituting abortion bans, forcing women into a pregnancy that wasn't supposed to happen. There are many factors that could affect the use of birth control and lead to unexpected pregnancies, along with many effects birth control can have on its user. Why aren't scientists and researchers trying to find a different solution? It would be beneficial to take action and prevent pregnancies at the source: men, because women's bodies can be unpredictable when altering hormones or trying to keep sperm away from where it is supposed to go.

There are many forms of birth control, and many reasons women choose different types. One of the most common is the pill. This form needs to be prescribed to you by a doctor, but

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recently online websites are trying to sell it to you without a prescription in an attempt to make it more accessible. There are two types of pills, the combination pill that contains both progestin (a synthetic form of progesterone) and estrogen and one that only contains progestin. These hormones are created in a female's body naturally and work to regulate functions throughout development in their body. Estrogen is a sex hormone and progesterone plays a key role in pregnancy and the preparation of the body for pregnancy. The combination pills as Slynd states, "...thicken the mucus inside the cervix, making it harder for sperm to travel to the egg. They also work to thin the lining of the uterine wall so that if an egg is fertilized, it is more difficult to implant." Slynd also states that "Progestin-only birth control pills also prevent pregnancy by thickening the mucus of the cervix and thinning the lining of the uterine wall." Many women choose the pill as their form of birth control because it is the simplest to take as you only take one pill a day. This can be challenging however because you need to take it at the same time every day for it to be most effective. If you miss a day or don't take the pill on time you can be at risk for pregnancy. It can be very difficult for some females because you cannot always predict how your day will go, you can often get too caught up in other things and forget to take it. Not only can it be tough to keep up with, but according to MSN and CRNA Rachel Nall, "However, with typical use, the effectiveness of the pill is 91 percent. This means that around 9 out of 100 women would become pregnant in a year of taking the pill." Not only that, but the pill also has a long list of possible side effects that come with taking it.

Side effects are a big reason as to why women stop taking the pill. A long list comes in your package of birth control pills which includes blood clots, heart attack, stroke, irregular

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bleeding, nausea, headaches/migraines, breast tenderness, weight gain, mood changes, etc. This list ranges from things that are just small and inconvenient to things that could cause death. No one should have these kinds of risks for just taking a contraceptive. At some points it seems as though the risks and upkeep just aren't worth taking the pill.

Another form of birth control that is less upkeep is an intrauterine device (IUD) which comes in two types, hormonal, and copper. A hormonal IUD uses progestin much like the pill, it prevents pregnancy according to Planned Parenthood by "...1) they thicken the mucus that lives on the cervix, which blocks and traps the sperm, and 2) the hormones also sometimes stop eggs from leaving your ovaries (called ovulation), which means there's no egg for a sperm to fertilize." In a copper IUD, Planned Parenthood states "Sperm doesn't like copper, so the Paragard IUD makes it almost impossible for sperm to get to that egg." IUDs are implanted into your uterus by your doctor and can stay in place for up to 7-12 years and still be effective. Women often aren't told exactly what happens during insertion and this procedure can be painful for many women. After it is placed, dizziness and fainting can occur for some. Many do find the pain worth the results because it is "...more than 99% effective. That means fewer than 1 out of 100 people who use an IUD will get pregnant each year." (Planned Parenthood). Unlike the pill, IUDs have less side effects. With the hormonal IUDs there can be pain and cramping from the insertion, after there can be spotting and irregular periods. With the copper IUDs, you can have the same side effects as hormonal, but you could additionally have heavier and longer periods, and/or worse cramping during your cycle. For some women the uncertainty of when you will get your period can be an issue in their everyday life and is not an ideal situation to have to deal

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with. Unexpected periods can make your days more difficult because you may not be prepared with feminine products, and you may need a change of underwear at the very least.

There are four other common types of birth control women can choose from (an implant, shot, ring, or patch). These kinds all work to thicken the mucus on the cervix and to stop ovulation. These four options however have many more side effects to them than the pill and an IUD. An implant is inserted in the arm which can cause effects of bleeding/spotting, longer and/or heavier periods, weight gain, nausea, ovarian cysts, an infection where the implant was inserted, breast pain, etc. A shot that is injected into your arm or your butt cheek can have side effects of changes in your period (bleeding more days, spotting in between periods), weight gain, depression, sore breasts, nausea, headaches, etc. A ring is inserted into the vaginal canal which could cause sore breasts, spotting, headaches, changes in your period, headaches, etc. With a patch you choose where on your body you put it, so it is most convenient for you. You could have skin reactions from where the patch is, changes in your period, spotting, sore breasts, headaches, nausea, etc.

There are so many options for women to choose from, yet none of them have minimal side effects to ensure safety in women's health. As well as in recent studies, there is evidence relating birth controls to cancer. It brings up the question, why should women be responsible for birth control and carrying a baby. Both can take huge tolls on a female's body so why should they alone be the ones responsible. Women do have good reasons for using birth control but in some cases, it can betray them. Their reasons could be for convenience, possible benefits, or how effective it can be. Most birth control options can lessen the effects of a female's period which can be the appeal to using one of the forms but in many cases, it can cause their period to

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become irregular or worsen their experiences through their cycle. For some women they don't even get a choice. Some parents put their daughters on birth control before they can really understand what it does and what it can do to their body. This could be for religious reasons or just to be sure their daughter doesn't get pregnant too early. You'll often hear that when girls start birth control (usually the pill) when they are in their early teens, they don't really know who they are until they stop when they are older. It is like they are feeling emotions for the first time again because the hormones can adjust your moods and emotions. Effects aren't always mental either, in many cases it can be physical. Many women report that they gained weight from some of the different types of birth control options. Women are suffering mentally and physically in order to prevent pregnancy and to possibly have benefits for their periods.

Not only can the health of women be at risk but so can their wallets. In various cases, insurance won't cover birth control if a female says it is for a contraceptive. However, if they say it is for health benefits insurances will often cover it (depending on insurance and your coverage plan). This means birth control is not always accessible for women. Not only is this system not fair, but it is very expensive and can mean women pay thousands in birth control bills.

In some instances, birth control can fail. Whether this be a condom breaking or not using their birth control correctly. When this happens, many females turn to an emergency contraceptive such as Plan B. This isn't always effective because Plan B works to just delay ovulation, not stop pregnancy. Plan B can also be less effective depending on how much you weigh. This can be an issue because almost half of Americans are obese. With this in mind, what happens if Plan B is used incorrectly or doesn't have enough time to work? For most women, unwanted pregnancy. This means they have three options now, carry the baby to keep or put up for adoption, or get an

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abortion. For some women they cannot carry the baby because of their health. Others they may not be financially stable, or they got pregnant from unwanted circumstances. Whatever the case they should have the option for what is best for them. From the Roe vs Wade court case, abortion is legal in all US states. This doesn't mean that it is easily accessible though. There are many laws now determining whether or not you can get an abortion in most states. This could be how far along you are, insurance policies, parental signatures, etc. No matter your views on abortion, it ultimately should be the women's choice in what she wants to do, not the governments. With so many new laws, women feel like they are no longer in control of their bodies. This is morally wrong and would not be acceptable if it were for men. It appears there is a double standard for what is tolerable for women, and what is for men.

With this in mind, if men objectively get better treatment than women throughout history, why shouldn't they be the gender with a contraceptive instead. Not only would scientists try to develop it to be safer for men, but also would make men responsible for accidental pregnancies instead of females. It would allow women to live life without worry of pregnancies, or side effects of extra hormones being in their system. Men also have an unlimited number of sperm count while women have a limited number of eggs. With that being said, men can impregnate many women within a year while a woman can only get pregnant once a year. Wouldn't it make more sense to stop the sperm at the source instead of trying to fight off millions of sperm going to one target?

Scientists have been working on studies about male birth control, but nothing has been released to the public yet because there are too many side effects, or they are inconvenient for men. There are shots and pills being experimented with now. According to John Donovan "you'd

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get a one-time shot of a long-acting substance. It goes into the tube that carries sperm out of your testes (called the vas deferens). After that injection, sperm can't leave the body. If circumstances change, another shot can clear the blockage and reverse the procedure.” This treatment is still being developed in India though. There are multiple hormone-based pills that have ongoing trials and no serious side effects. There was also a gel that got rubbed over your upper arm and was experimented with back in 2012. There are still studies on this as well.

While this is progress in the attempt to develop a contraceptive for men to take, I think there could be many more types being experimented with. Women have implants, shots, pills, IUD's etc. I don't think any option should be off the table for the kinds of contraceptive men could have. In addition, women's birth control was released to the public even with side effects. In the development for men, if it is inconvenient or non-ideal circumstances, it is being experimented with further to minimize them or get rid of them completely. While this is ideal for men, it should have been done for females as well. It may be more difficult with male hormones, but that is only because they are not as familiar since they have mainly been working with female hormones. With more research there should be more advancements than what is coming out.

There are options that are already readily available for men now, but most men wouldn't/don't want to use them. One option is a vasectomy. This option is not easily reversible but is easily accessible; however, most men would not want to get this surgery done unless they are finished having children. Either way, men do not want to undergo surgery as it would be painful and inconvenient for them. For women however, they take birth control before they want children, so they don't have a child too soon. In addition, they also have the option to get their

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tubes tied but this isn't always reversible either and not easily accessible unlike the male version of this. Men have the option to use condoms as well which are about 98% effective when perfectly used and 85% when mistakes are accounted for according to Planned Parenthood. Although a great option, men give excuses to women saying, "it doesn't feel as good" or "they are too big". Both of these are excuses and puts the blame on women if they are pregnant instead of the man for not putting in proper prevention. The suggestion of more options is an attempt for there to no longer be excuses. With more options the hope is to finally get men to take responsibility for their actions put the responsibility of birth control on them.

Some men may say they do not want to use a contraceptive because females have used it for so long. This is simply not acceptable. There are medical procedures that have been improved upon as time goes on. This is how it should be. Improvement as time goes on is always necessary to keep up with changes in the world and in science. There are also reasons like more women having a success case than failed case. There are always accidents and that doesn't mean the failed cases are any less important than the success cases. This is simply men just not wanting the responsibility when a failed case occurs.

Women deserve not to be responsible for carrying a baby and taking birth control. Men should take an initiative and be the ones to take a contraceptive when it is made available. Scientists should be working harder to find a solution to this problem, so women don't have to keep suffering. With male contraceptive in progress mental and physical side effects should not be worth the benefits of birth control. Women deserve to live a healthy life that doesn't have hormones effecting any aspects.

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