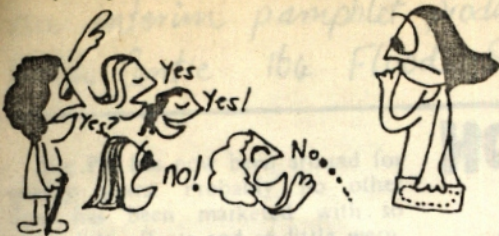


THE GOOD, THE BAD, and THE UGLY (or, is it worth it?)



First, the GOOD news... ADVANTAGES

- Contraception - safe, reliable and convenient.
- Lighter periods - you will bleed less and for a shorter time (three days on average) when you take the pill. This is normal.
- Regular periods - you know when your period will come.
- Less pain with your periods - some women take the pill for this reason alone.
- Less pre-menstrual tension - many women find tension before their periods is relieved while on the pill, some find it worse.
- Improved condition of your hair and skin. Acne improves in 80-90% of cases. Can be made worse in very small number of cases.



- Some women experience pain in the middle of their monthly cycle. This is caused by ovulation (release of egg) and, of course, disappears while you are on the pill.
- Relief from worry about pregnancy!



Who should NOT take the pill?

- Women who are pregnant
- Women with impaired liver function.
- Women who have ever had a blood clotting disorder
- Women who have had heart disease
- Women who have had breast tumours that have been shown to be oestrogen dependent
- Women who have unusual vaginal bleeding which has not been investigated and a cause found.

The following women would be well advised not to take the pill

- Those with a strong family history of diabetes or who have diabetes
- Women with high blood pressure (resting diastolic level of 110 mm HG or greater)
- Women with gall bladder disease gall stones may develop more readily
- Women who have been menstruating less than two years - bone growth may be stunted
- Women who smoke have a three times greater risk of cardiovascular disease than non smokers on the pill
- Women with existing uterine fibroids risk hastening their growth by taking oestrogen
- Women with sickle cell anaemia
- Older women: under 35 risk is 1 in 20,000 of developing cardiovascular disease
between 35 and 44 risk is 1 in 3,000
over 45 risk is 1 in 700
- likelihood of developing high blood pressure increases with the amount of time you are on the pill
- Women who have irregular periods or who started menstruating after the age of 15 may have difficulty commencing regular menstruation after being on the pill. Having an annual one month break from the pill will not help in reestablishing the natural cycle.
- Women who are overweight
- Women who have had epileptic attacks or toxæmia in pregnancy or kidney disease



and so ~ the BAD news...

The pill is a dangerous drug. Unfortunately it has been marketed as a "safe convenient contraceptive" for so long that we tend to underestimate its effect on a woman's body. There are a number of effects on other areas of the body besides the reproductive area that every woman taking the pill should know about.

DIABETES

The majority of women who take a combined pill (with both oestrogen and progestogen) show a mild worsening of ability to metabolize glucose. This may return to normal when the pill is stopped. The development of diabetes is rare but takes a long time to develop. Dr. Spellacy of the University of Florida College of Medicine (Gainesville, USA) has been investigating diabetic type changes in the metabolism of pill users since 1962. He found that 5-15% of women had pronounced diabetic type changes and that some women in this group did develop diabetes. Inexplicably, Spellacy lost his Federal government funding and has had to discontinue this valuable research.

The evidence linking the pill to diabetes is contradictory. Professor Briggs, summarizing the findings of the Tenth World Congress of Fertility and Sterility concludes that pill users have a reduced incidence of diabetes compared to non pill users. The crucial factor appears to be time: all women who take the pill will undergo changes that can lead to diabetes. Only long term studies can tell if diabetes is more common in pill users and how long this takes to develop.

Any woman who is already diabetic should avoid the pill: it can make diabetes worse. Any woman who is related to a diabetic, is overweight, or who has given birth to a baby over 5,000 gms. at birth, could be susceptible to developing diabetes. You should have a urine sugar test before going on the pill and at regular intervals while on it.