

BIRTH CONTROL

Our Advice:

Don't Rely On

Advertisements For

Information

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Whether to practice birth control, and if so by what means, is a matter for individuals to decide. We have no comments to make on the moral and religious issues involved. But we believe that those who do practise birth control are entitled to, and should seek, the very best information available.

Two recent advertisements therefore give us concern, for they are in our opinion misleading. They were drawn to our attention by a doctor who was very critical of the claims made.

THE C.D. INDICATOR

This device—the Conception Days Indicator (CDI)—is used for calculating a woman's safe and fertile days and sells for \$14.

There are several misleading aspects of the advertisement shown above:

- It gives the impression of an important new discovery ("Exciting news"; "One of the greatest of recent discoveries"). But in fact the CDI is based on the Ogino-Knaus theory, described by two doctors as long ago as 1929.
- The CDI is said by the advertiser to be "simple, harmless and certain". But the British Consumers' Association, which has tested contraceptive devices, concluded in a January 1970 report:

"The CD Indicator was expensive, had a relatively narrow margin of safety, and was rather complicated to use."

One of our consulting physicians tells us that the CDI makes no allowance for the fact that ovulation may be delayed in any particular month.

The advertisement claims that this device is far superior to the Pill. But neither the British Consumers' Association, nor a recent textbook* on the subject, agrees with this view. The statement that the CDI has none of the "attendant dangers" of the Pill is true—but can be misleading. The health risks in taking the Pill are very low, while the risks due to pregnancy are probably much higher. With the CDI the user has a greater chance of becoming pregnant than if she takes the Pill.

^{*} Textbook of Contraceptive Practice by John Peel and Malcolm Potts. Cambridge University Press, 1969. Soft cover \$2.65 N.Z. Mr Peel is Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of Hull; and Dr Potts is Director of Medical Studies, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

NIOZEN

We have received critical remarks about the advertisement shown opposite and about leaflets supplied to those who answer it.

- The statement "universally approved" is open to question. This product is made in New Zealand and we have seen no references to it under the same name in overseas publications.
- The statement that Niozen is reliable is misleading. Both the British Consumers' Association and the Peel and Potts textbook rate chemical methods as among the least reliable ones. This product is a vaginal suppository which melts at body temperature. The British Consumers' Association says of this method: "Like creams, these are not very reliable if used alone". In addition, Peel and Potts state that "Suppositories . . . are the most convenient, and least reliable, of all forms of chemical contraception".
- A leaflet for Niozen says that in addition to its effectiveness as a contraceptive, ". . . it is also a powerful germicide and will kill most disease germs quickly on contact . . .". A doctor who wrote to us was concerned about this and similar statements in the leaflet because she felt they would mislead young people into thinking that Niozen will prevent venereal disease, when, in fact, we are told by an authoritative medical source that this product is ineffective in either the prevention or cure of venereal disease.

SEEK THE BEST ADVICE

On medical matters we always advise you to seek expert advice, and we do so again. We believe advertisements are an inadequate source of information on matters relating to bodily health and welfare. We are particularly concerned that unmarried girls may rely on the advice given in advertisements and associated pamphlets. Regrettably, many of them prefer not to go to their doctor for advice.

For the person who wants frank, unbiased written information plus test reports, we believe the British Consumers' Association book on contraception would be difficult to better. Unfortunately it is not readily available in New Zealand but you can enquire from Consumers' Association (Dept XBN), Subscription Department, Caxton Hill, Hertford, England.

Much has been written about health risks associated with the Pill, and some of the advertisements play upon this.

Except for sterilisation the Pill is the most reliable method of contraception. Its health risks appear to be very limited, and are almost certainly less than the risks associated with pregnancy itself.

Here again the advice of your doctor is essential. He is able to describe the different methods of contraception and, with his knowledge of your medical history, will help you to make a decision about which is best for you.

ARE YOU INTERESTED?

The Supplement on Contraceptives by the British Consumers' Association, mentioned in this article, is thorough and highly commended. It includes chapters explaining conception, and the different methods of contraception, plus comparative tests of different contraceptives, giving brand names, effectiveness, and general advice.

We are investigating the possibility of arranging to reprint this publication, suitably modified for New Zealand conditions.

We would be glad to know how many members would be interested in purchasing such a reprint. Please write to CONTRACEPTIVES, Consumers' Institute, Private Bag, Te Aro, Wellington 1.

FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Family Planning Clinics are another source of reliable information and advice. Here you will find trained doctors and nurses, knowledgeable about all methods of birth control, who will help you choose the method best suited to your needs. This advice, and other services such as a library of helpful books, is available for a small annual fee; but no one is ever turned away who cannot afford to pay. Family Planning Clinics are located in Whangarei, Auckland, Palmerston North, Upper Hutt, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

OFFENSIVE MATERIAL

Other advertisements we have answered have brought leaflets offering contraceptive devices and stimulators which we find offensive. Such advertisements are usually small classified ones. But this is another hazard of seeking birth control information from advertisements or through the mail—the literature may not only be misleading—but offensive as well.

SUPPLIERS' COMMENTS

The Chemists' Supplies Co. Ltd of Christchurch say that, in the few months since they became the first official representatives for the CDI in New Zealand, they have sold a large number and received no complaints. The firm does not, however, produce any scientific evidence to support its claims for reliability of the CDI.

Wilfrid Owen Ltd of Christchurch says that Niozen is made in New Zealand and not sold throughout the world.

We feel that "universally approved" implies far more than this.

Mr Owen repeats that Niozen is reliable but he produces no scientific proof. Even though it contains sperm killing substances we have several expert medical opinions that chemical contraceptives are not reliable when used alone.