Health center warns again birth control ad

Stacy Viles
University of Maine
Health center warns against birth control ad

by Stacy Viles

The director of the Cutler Health Center said Tuesday that an advertisement for a new contraceptive is misleading.

Dr. Robert Graves said the ads for Encare Oval, a vaginal suppository, were not accurate. Graves said the contraceptive was no more effective than any other suppositories on the market.

He also discussed the merits of the other contraceptives available to UMO students.

"It was an outright lie for them to say it (Encare Oval) is 99 percent effective," Graves said.

Encare Oval is a small, waxy suppository which is placed high in the vagina just prior to intercourse. It contains nonoxynol-9, a spermicidal ingredient found in other similar contraceptives.

Graves said, "There's no reason for it to be any more effective than any other suppository."

Because it requires manual placement high in the vagina and a 10 minute waiting period for dispersion, doctors believe it will fail at least as often as other similar products.

Correct placement is essential in order for the contraceptive to be effective. If inserted too soon before intercourse, the liquid will become ineffective, and if not placed high enough in the vagina, the suppository will fail to block the sperm from entering the uterus.

In selecting a birth control method, a women's medical history and physical and mental condition must be considered.

Each person should consult a physician and discuss the options available.

Oral contraceptives (the 'Pill) are the most widely used method used, but because of the side effects, many women are looking at other birth control methods.

Risks associated with the pill include a greater incidence of heart disease and problems with blood clotting. Women who have had cancer of the breast or uterus should not use the pill.

Intra-uterine devices generally are believed to be highly effective. As with birth control pills, a prescription is needed because an IUD must be inserted into the uterus by a doctor. No routine care is needed, but women using IUDs should be checked once a year by a doctor.

Disadvantages of the IUD may include pain or discomfort when inserted, cramps, and a heavier menstrual flow. Also, the IUD may be expelled without the women's knowledge.

IUD's are generally not recommended for those women who have had pelvic infection, heavy menstrual flow, bleeding between periods, fibroid tumors, heavy vaginal discharge or infection, recent pregnancy, recent abortion, cancer of the cervix, severe menstrual cramps, venereal disease or periods of fainting.

A fourth birth control method, the diaphragm, also requires a prescription. A doctor must fit the diaphragm and instruct the patient about insertion. There is no effect on the chemical or physical processes as with the pills or the IUD, but the diaphragm is inconvenient, because it must be inserted before intercourse and removed afterward.

"Over-the-counter" birth control devices include foam, cream or jelly (used without diaphragm), vaginal suppositories and condoms.

Foams, creams or jelly are easy to obtain and to use, but they must be used 30 minutes or less before intercourse. Not only do the foams serve as a barrier at the opening of the uterus, they also chemically prevent sperm from reaching an egg in the uterus. An allergic reaction might result from using foams. Changing brands usually solves the problem.

Condoms, the only method available to men, not only protect against pregnancy but also venereal disease. There are no serious side effects, and they are easily available. Effectiveness, as with other devices, depends on correctly using the condoms.

The rhythm method, when the woman must refrain from sexual intercourse on those days surrounding the predicted time of ovulation and sterilization are other alternatives.