

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

Plan B, emergency contraception, can be purchased without a prescription by both men and women.

Q Do men have any sort of birth control other than condoms?

A. Quick: what do pomegranates, papaya, okra, hemp, and cotton seeds all have in common? Believe it or not, they've all been used and/or researched in the elusive quest for male birth control. As you suggest, the options – at least the ones that actually work – are far more limited for guys. In the end, the number of methods for men comes down to exactly two, or maybe three if you are feeling lucky: condoms (check), vasectomy (yikes), and the withdrawal method (probably better as a backup plan).

These days, it's easy to take the long list of female birth control options for granted. In mostly the last 50 years or so, women have been offered options ranging from the pill, the patch, the shot, the ring, IUDs, the sponge, diaphragms, and more.

So why has the male "pill" been so difficult to produce? The short answer is that while women produce one egg per month, men make an average of over 1,000 sperm every second of every day!

It turns out that the elusive man pill might still be possible, though. Recent research has shown that a compound called JQ1, which works to block both sperm production and their movement, could be a promising candidate. About time, don't you think, ladies? JQ1 also offers advantages in that its effects are reversible and it doesn't seem to decrease testosterone levels. It may still be awhile until you can pick some up at your local Campus Health Pharmacy, though. Research continues on JQ1 as well as other methods, but as of now, none are close to being approved by the FDA.

In the meantime, the best reversible form of birth control for guys is still the condom. The good news is that when used correctly they can provide excellent protection against both unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Even better news? They won't cost you a dime during Free Condom Fridays from 12-2pm at Campus Health.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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