IUC's, Sterilization, Natural Family Planning

A PowerPoint presentation (no narration) containing some of this information is available here (IUC, sterilization) and here (natural family planning/fertility awareness methods). Those without PowerPoint can view the information in pdf format here (IUC, sterilization) and here (natural family planning/fertility awareness methods).

Intrauterine Contraceptive
The intrauterine contraceptive (IUC), also referred to as an intrauterine device (IUD), is among the few long-term contraceptives currently available. Despite its lack of popularity in the United States, the IUC is commonly used in other parts of the world as a way to prevent conception. An IUC is inserted into a female's uterus by a healthcare professional, after which it remains in place as long as 10-12 years, depending upon the brand. Currently, there are three IUC brands available to women in the U.S.: Mirena, a hormone-based IUC that may remain in place for up to five years; Skyla, a smaller hormone-based IUC that may remain in place for up to three years; and the copper-based ParaGard IUC, which works for 10-12 years.

The IUC has an extremely high effectiveness rate against pregnancy, approximately 99%, but does nothing to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

The student is to read more about the IUC at Planned Parenthood (R)

The photo on the left features the Mirena IUD, while the photo on the right shows the Paragard IUD. Information is in the public domain, retrieved via Wikimedia Commons.

- To view a Pargard (sometimes also called the CopperT) IUD, the student can travel to a video produced by the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, via YouTube (O)
- To view more information about Skyla, approved by the FDA in 2013, the student can visit the product website (O)


Sterilization
Sterilization, considered irreversible, is the most effective contraceptive method available aside from abstinence, and is the second most common method used in the United States, after oral contraceptive pills. There are currently three forms of sterilization available in the U.S., vasectomy, tubal ligation, and Essure.
A vasectomy is a surgical procedure conducted on male reproductive anatomy. The vas deferens, a tube leading away from each testicle that carries sperm and seminal fluid, is cut so that sperm cannot travel through the reproductive system and out the penis, thus preventing pregnancy. Travel to Penn State-Hershey Medical Center to view before-and-after vasectomy male anatomy illustrations (R—click through the numbers to view the images). Also travel to Planned Parenthood, which provides more information on vasectomy (R).

A tubal ligation, or tubal sterilization, is a surgical procedure conducted on female reproductive anatomy. The fallopian tubes leading away from the ovaries to the uterus are cut so that an ovum cannot travel toward sperm, avoiding fertilization and, therefore, pregnancy. Travel to MyHealth.Alberta.ca to view an image showing an illustration of female reproductive anatomy and what happens to the fallopian tubes after ligation (R). Also travel to Planned Parenthood, which provides more information on tubal sterilization (R).

The third sterilization technique, tubal implants, are used on female reproductive anatomy. Surgical metal coil implants are placed in the fallopian tubes, after which scar tissue grows over the coils, blocking the ovum from traveling from the ovary to the uterus. The Essure tubal implant website has a video showing how the method works (R).

Online video sterilization resources (O—sensitive material):

- Nucleus Medical Media has a tubal ligation video available via YouTube
- Vasectomymedical.com shows a streaming video of a no-scalpel vasectomy.
- Medical Politis/St. Peter Urology has a vasectomy animation video available via YouTube.

Fertility Awareness Methods

Fertility awareness contraceptive methods do not involve hormones or devices. Instead, they involve familiarity with one's own human reproductive anatomy and physiology, as well as education about pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. For instance, the temperature method requires a female to track her body temperature every day, since variations in temperature occur with fertility changes in the menstrual cycle.

While contraceptive practices based solely on fertility awareness generally have higher failure rates than other contraceptive methods, many people rely on them for a variety of reasons. Some individuals may be sensitive or allergic to a chosen barrier contraceptive, others may dislike hormone-based contraceptive side effects, and still others may have medical directives against using hormone-based methods. Some persons may be with partners who refuse to use contraceptive methods, so fertility awareness can help avoid pregnancy in such circumstances. Furthermore, pregnancy prevention may be more of a preference than an absolute requirement in some relationships. Finally, religious, spiritual, or other personal inclinations make fertility awareness contraceptive methods attractive alternatives. Regardless of pregnancy prevention effectiveness, none of these methods prevent sexually transmitted infections.

The student should be familiar with the following fertility awareness contraceptive methods using the Planned Parenthood link below:

- Temperature method
- Cervical mucus method
- Calendar method
- Standard days method
- Symptothermal method

Planned Parenthood: Fertility Awareness-Based Methods (R)