

Gynaecology Helpline

- **I recently read the term ‘hormone headaches’? How different is it from regular headaches and how can one tell the difference between the two? Please elaborate.**

Hormone headache or menstrual migraines happen to some women and is related to fluctuation in hormonal levels especially estrogen and usually happens just before the onset of menstrual flow due to sudden drop in blood estrogen levels. It's more severe than the migraine happening at other times of the cycle. It doesn't happen only during periods; it can happen with OCP use especially during pill free interval when estrogen is not supplemented, menopause or pregnancy in initial weeks but subsides completely after few weeks of pregnancy. At least three menstrual calendars to be maintained to diagnose hormonal migraine. You can prevent these migraines by eating health and frequent meals, by avoiding stress and having a regular sleep pattern. Some medications help such as continuous OCP, hormone replacement therapy for menopausal women and anti-migraine drugs in some cases such as tryptans.

- **I've heard from a friend about a technique that prevents pregnancy for the period of a year, regardless of regular intercourse. Could you tell me what this might be? How do I ensure that my friend is well informed and does no harm to her body or health? Should I be concerned?**

Your friend is using one type of Long Acting Reversible Contraceptive, probably an IUD or Intrauterine Device or Contraceptive Implants like Implanon.

IUD are two types copper containing IUD that works for 3, 5 or 10 years and the other one is hormonal IUD or MIRENA that works for 5 years. These are reversible contraceptives, if they are discontinued, fertility returns and very effective as well with some side effects such as little bleeding problems in the initial phases.

Implanon is a match stick size flexible rod that is put under the skin of upper arm and it works for three years and its has progesterone hormone which helps in contraception.

- **The most common advice given for PCOD is weight loss. But the prescribed medication itself causes weight gain. Can we approach this condition differently? What can we do to ensure our body functions properly?**

PCOD is a hormonal imbalance which results in increased insulin resistance and variety of its manifestations. The first line of treatment is weight loss and diet which helps reducing insulin resistance and its manifestations as well. Usually the drugs which are prescribed for PCOD are OCP containing Anti-androgens and in some cases Glycomet. It's a myth associated with OCP that they cause weight gain, actually the OCP containing anti-androgens work very well for PCOD patients. You can discuss more about this with your doctor.

- **What are female condoms? Is it a better choice as compared to pills? What would you advise as the safest and foolproof contraceptive method for regular use?**

Female condoms are made up of thin, soft plastic made up of Polyurethane. It is worn inside the vagina to prevent sperm entering the womb. This prevents pregnancy and also sexually

transmitted diseases. If used correctly and consistently, it is 95% effective. Male condoms are widely available and female condoms are little more expensive than male condoms. Do not use male and female condoms together.

If you ask foolproof method of contraception, then always use double protection like oral contraceptive pills with barrier method like male or female condoms. It gives protection against pregnancy also and also prevents sexually transmitted infections.

- **What is pelvic floor rehab therapy? How does it help in intercourse?**

Pelvic floor rehabilitation therapy aims to improve strength and function of pelvic floor. Pelvic floor is made up of various muscles extending from the pelvic bones to tail bone and these muscles help maintaining a lot of functions such as urine continence, fecal continence and sexual functions. The pelvic floor muscles may become, weak, spastic or tight as a result of disuse, surgery or trauma or after repeated child birth. Physical therapists assess these muscles and help in strengthening these muscles and regain their normal functions such as good control of bladder, bowel and sexual function as well.