

## Contraceptives and Abortion

According to the Shi'ah *fiqh*, family planning as a private measure to space or regulate the family size for health or economic reasons is permissible. Neither is there any Qur'anic verse or *hadith* against birth control, nor is it *wajib* to have children in marriage.

### The Contraceptive Methods

Let us examine some of the most commonly used contraceptive methods and determine whether they are permissible in Islam or not. It must be mentioned that we are studying the permissibility of these methods from the Shariah point of view only. For the medical opinion about the reliability or any side-effects of these methods, the reader must consult his or her physician. Further each individual needs to check additional conditions which may apply as per his *Marja'a*.

#### Oral Contraceptives

Birth control pills prevent conception by inhibiting ovulation. Since all such pills inhibit ovulation, there is absolutely no problem in using them. However, the individual must consult the physician about possible side-effects.

The pills like the 'morning-after' and RU486 may be taken after the intercourse BUT not after feeling or knowing that pregnancy has already occurred.

#### Depo-Provera

Depo-Provera works exactly like the pills, but instead of taking it orally it is injected once every three months. This and other similar contraceptive methods by injection are also permissible.

#### Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

IUDs are plastic or metal objects, in a variety of shapes, that are implanted inside the uterus. Since the *shari'* pregnancy begins at implantation, there is no problem in using IUD as a birth control device.

## Barrier Devices

All barrier devices prevent the sperm from entering the uterus. This is done by sheathing the penis with a condom, or by covering the cervix with a diaphragm, cervical cap, or vaginal sponge. The use of spermicidal substances which kill the sperm before reaching the ovum is also a barrier device. There is absolutely no problem in using these contraceptives either.

## Abstinence During Fertile Period

There are three basic procedures to predict ovulation so that sexual intercourse can be avoided during the approximately six days of a woman's most fertile monthly phase. These three methods are as follows:

- a) Ovulation Method: A woman learns to recognize the fertile time by checking the difference in the constitution of the cervical mucus discharge. The cervical mucus discharge signals the highly fertile period; and thus avoiding sex during the fertile days prevents pregnancy.
- b) Rhythm Method: A method similar to the first, but it depends on observing the monthly cycles for a whole year to determine the fertile days.
- c) Temperature: In this method, besides keeping a calendar record of her cycle, a woman also takes her temperature daily to detect ovulation. She can know her ovulation whenever her basal body temperature increases.

## Withdrawal (Coitus Interruptus)

Coitus interruptus means withdrawing the penis just before ejaculation. This was the most common method of birth control before the invention of modern devices.

Muhammad bin Muslim and 'Abdur Rahman bin Abi 'Abdillah Maymun asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (A.S.) about withdrawal. The Imam (A.S.) said, *"It is up to the man; he may spill it wherever he wants."* <sup>1</sup> Based on this *hadith*, the majority of our *mujtahids* believe that coitus interruptus is allowed but *makruh* without the wife's consent. <sup>2</sup>

All methods mentioned above do not involve surgical operation and they are also reversible. A woman (or man) using these methods can stop using them at anytime in order to have a child.

## Sterilization

Sterilization involves surgical operation.

Sterilization in men, known as vasectomy, means the severing or blocking of the tube in the male reproductive tract. This tube or duct passes sperm from the testes to the prostate and other reproductive organs.

Sterilization in women, known as tubal ligation, involves the blocking or severing of the fallopian tubes which transport the ovum.

The permissibility of sterilization depends on whether or not it is reversible.

### [A Woman can Practice Birth Control](#)

The wife has full right to the use of contraceptives even without the approval of her husband.<sup>3</sup> However, she should not use a method which may come in the way of her husband's conjugal rights. For example, she cannot force him to use condom or practice coitus interruptus. This rule is based upon the principle that the extent of the husband's conjugal rights over his wife is just that she should be sexually available, responsive, and cooperative. This right does not extend to that of bearing children for him. Bearing children or not is a personal decision of the woman; and therefore, she may use contraceptives provided they do not come in the way of her husband's conjugal rights.

### [Abortion](#)

Islam's approach to the issue of birth control and abortion is very balanced. It allows women to prevent pregnancy but forbids them to terminate it. Abortion after the implantation of the fertilized ovum in the womb is absolutely forbidden and is considered a crime against the law of God, and the fetus.

<sup>1</sup>. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a, vol. 14, p. 105

<sup>2</sup>. Sharh Lum'a, vol. 2, p. 28; al-'Urwah, p. 628; Minhaj, vol. 2, p. 267

<sup>3</sup>. Minhaj, vol. 2, p. 276

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