

21st-century

BIRTH CONTROL

NEW DEVICES ARE STARTING
TO CATCH ON IN QUAD-CITIES

By **Deirdre Cox Baker**
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New birth-control products that provide long-lasting and effective protection against unwanted pregnancy are gaining a foothold in the Quad-Cities.

AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC TALKS

Members of the staff at the Edgerton Women's Health Center in Davenport are available to speak to groups and organizations about being responsible when it comes to both sexual relations and personal relationships.

Presentations have been made so far in area educational settings, including community colleges, technical and trade schools.

Those interested should contact Libbet Brooke, a health educator and counselor at the center, by calling (563) 823-9229 or e-mailing her at llbrooke@maternal.org.

Three, including two types of intrauterine devices, or IUDs, and a hormone that is injected in the arm, have debuted in the past few years. Medical officials say they are catching on, but the contraceptive of choice remains a standard pill or patch, used by up to 80 percent of women of child-bearing age.

Nevertheless, the Edgerton Women's Health Center in Davenport has seen much wider use of IUDs, especially since it is now able to offer them free or at low cost to qualified individuals. That is possible because of the Iowa Initiative, announced in March, which provides funds from

the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation to support the use of the ParaGard and Mirena IUDs as well as the Implanon insert. Unintended pregnancies account for 73 percent of births

IUDS

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among Iowa women 18-19 years old and 48 percent of all births to those who are 20-25 years old. The state's cost for those births is \$47 million, according to former Iowa first lady Christie Vilsack, who promoted the Iowa Initiative program during a visit to Dav-
enport in the spring.

The Edgerton clinic performed a record 45 IUD insertions in June. That compares with a total of 46 over the previous fiscal year. "This new type is going gangbusters," said Libbet Brooke, a health educator and counselor at the clinic.

Mirena is the big seller since it includes progestin, which may help women control menstrual flow for about five years, followed by the Paragard IUD, which is made of copper and lasts for 10 years or more. Ranking third is Implanon, the arm insert that lasts for three years.

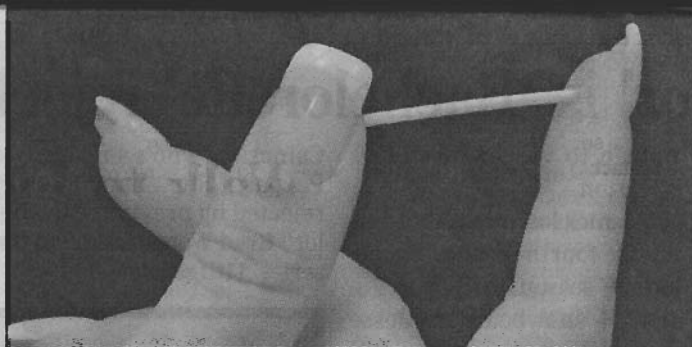
The costs of the methods range from \$450 to \$850 for those who do not qualify for the Iowa Initiative. All are easily and quickly reversible, and they are among the most effective now available, officials say.

Real world use

"There is some frustration with pills and shots," said Dr. Jeffrey Maurus, the medical director for the women's program at the Rock Island County Health Department and a member of the county Board of Health. He believes the use of the three methods is up 10 percent to 15 percent among his clients.

The standard pills, patches and hormonal shots are highly effective in a laboratory setting, the doctor explained, but when it comes to the real world, some women forget to take them as directed.

Relatively few of the women who see Dr. Richard Kishiue, a Quad-City gynecologist, choose the IUD or Implanon method, he said. However, the doctor has inserted more IUDS in the past few years and thinks the



SCHERING CORPORATION

The Implanon contraceptive is one of the new IUDs that are being used in the Quad-Cities.

methodology is sound.

"These new IUDs are a better design. Mirena can reduce the menstrual flow, and 20 percent of users have no flow," he said. "Paragard lasts for so long, like 10 years."

Kishiue, with Genesis Health Group in Bettendorf, said the new methods are highly effective for those who do not want to have to remember to take pills. The front-end cost can be pricey, he said, but when calculated over the years, it is a less expensive form of contraception.

None of the new methods cause a fertilized egg to be dislodged from the uterus, Maurus explained, but each is hostile to initial conception. That is an important distinction to some, he added.

The Roman Catholic Church forbids the use of contraceptive methods that promote an environment hostile to conception. The church endorses natural family planning to both achieve and avoid pregnancy, according to the planning department section on the Web site for the United States Council of Catholic Bishops.

Natural family planning uses no drugs, devices or surgical procedures, as explained on the site, uscbb.org/pro-life/issues/nfp. It is based on signs of fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle.

Improved technique

Implanon has gained favor since one of its predecessors, Norplant, faded away six years ago. The makers of Norplant — six tiny capsules inserted under the skin — pulled the device in 2002 after

some users filed lawsuits alleging that they had trouble removing it, among other difficulties.

The Dalkon Shield, a form of IUD, was pulled in the 1980s after users suffered severe pelvic infections, which doctors believe came from its design. However, the basic IUD is in common use worldwide and considered a safe form of contraception.

Implanon, a single matchstick-size rod that releases a hormone called etonogestrel at regular intervals, is relatively simple to implant and keeps discomfort at a minimum, Maurus said. The manufacturer "goes to great lengths" to ensure that trained individuals do the insertion, he added. It also can be removed quickly, taking about 30 seconds.

The downside to Implanon is unpredictable menstrual flow, "for which we have no fix," Kishiue said.

But Implanon is helpful to those women who are trying to put intervals of years between births and is especially good for the "pain-averse," Maurus said.

Edgerton clinic staffers speak regularly to young women to educate them on the subjects of responsible sexual relations and personal relationships. Young women readily accept the concept of long-lasting, reversible contraception, Brooke said. "There's no reason why anyone in the Quad Cities who wants this should not have it," she added.

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