

Focus on Health

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Conception Timing

A study of timing of intercourse to achieve pregnancy reveals that conception is possible from intercourse beginning about 5 days before ovulation extending through the day of ovulation. Conception on the day after ovulation has never been documented. Highest probability occurs with intercourse one or two days before ovulation rather than the day of ovulation itself. The most appropriate method of identifying the entire fertile window prospectively for the purpose of achieving pregnancy is the charting of vaginal discharge, rather than basal body temperatures, iuteinizing hormone detection, or calendar calculations.

How Good Are Generic Drugs?

How good are generic drugs? They account for almost 50% of all prescriptions and are rising rapidly, because on average a generic prescription costs \$15, while a brand name costs \$77. Are they reliable? The F.D.A. does not have the resources or manpower to monitor generic quality. Only 0.00001 per cent of the 3 billion prescriptions filled in community pharmacies each year are randomly tested. Basically, therefore, the F.D.A. relies on the honor system. Also, it is not illegal in Texas for a pharmacist to fill a prescription with a generic, charge for the brand name, and pocket the difference. For these reasons, beware of generics.

Emergency Contraception

Three methods of emergency contraception were evaluated in a recent study. The safest and most effective method turned out to be **levonorgestrel**, given twice, 12 hours apart, within 72 hours after unprotected intercourse. It is available under the label "Plan B" at most pharmacies in the U.S., and local Planned Parenthood Clinics offer it without physician prescriptions as well.

As part of the professional services I feel should be provided by me to my patients, screening of the voluminous medical literature has become more and more important. Please read this now if you have time before I see you, so that we can further discuss whichever topic especially interests you.

Perhaps you have seen an item that I have not included in this list or have not seen myself. If so, feel free to bring it to my attention.

Smokers Have Fewer Male Babies

According to Norwegian and Japanese studies involving 12,000 live births, those couples who smoked "heavily" (more than 20 cigarettes daily) produced 20% less male infants relative to girl infants. If the women alone smoked, the difference was 18%. If the man alone smoked, the difference was 2%. This is puzzling since the male supplies the Y chromosome which determines male gender in the offspring. It may be that the male fetus is more fragile than the female, causing a higher loss of male infants in utero in women who smoke heavily.

Yearly Pap Smear a Must

In a large case-control study, 2 and 3 year Pap Smear screening intervals approximately doubled the risk of invasive cervical cancer compared with a 1 year interval, the American Cancer Society's recent new guidelines notwithstanding.

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