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YOUR BIRTH CONTROL UPDATE

Seriously, it's 2017. So why do close to 60 per cent of the women we polled still rely on "pulling out" as their go-to contraception method, when there are options for even the laziest? Hoe I Yune reports on safe sex in the 21st century.

SUCCESS RATE

99%

JAYDESS INTRAUTERINE SYSTEM (IUS)



WHAT ▶ Approved in Singapore last June, Jaydess is a 50-cent-coin-sized T-shaped plastic device your gynaecologist inserts into your womb, where it slowly releases a small amount of progestogen. This hormone thickens cervical mucus so sperm cannot easily swim through the cervical canal to get to the egg. The IUS is touted by doctors as one of the most reliable forms of contraception; unlike the pill, you don't have to worry about missed doses. According to health-care solutions company

QuintilesIMS, there was an 11 per cent jump in the use of such long-acting reversible options over the past year. Don't freak out if your period becomes lighter, shorter or even stops – these are common side effects.

USE IT IF ▶ You want a break between babies or are done having kids, as the device stays in you for three to five years. See your doctor to remove it.

DON'T USE IF ▶ You have unexplained vaginal bleeding, liver inflammation or hormone-dependent conditions such as breast and womb cancers.

SUCCESS RATE

99%

DEPO-PROVERA CONTRACEPTIVE INJECTION



WHAT ▶ Depo-provera, available here since 1989, involves the injection of the hormone progestogen into muscle – usually in the buttock, leg or arm – to stop the release of eggs. Like the Jaydess IUS, "it thickens the cervical mucus to impede the passage of sperm into the uterus", says Dr Quek Swee Chong, an obstetrics and gynaecology specialist

at Glencagles Hospital. You get the jab from your doctor between the first and fifth day of your period, and it lasts three months. Common side effects include headaches, stomach aches and weight gain.

USE IT IF ▶ You're not up for the long-term commitment of an IUS.

DON'T USE IF ▶ Your periods aren't regular.

SUCCESS RATE

99%

ORTHO EVRA PATCH

WHEN USED CORRECTLY



WHAT ▶ This self-adhesive birth control patch has been around since 2003. You stick it on a clean, dry and non-hairy patch of skin – think: your upper arm or lower abdomen – which will then absorb the hormones that stop the release of eggs. Stomach upsets also don't mess with absorption. Expect side effects such as breast tenderness, spotting and migraines, which go away after you've been on the patch for two to three months. **Dr Christopher Ng**, obstetrician and gynaecologist at GynaeMD Women's &

Rejuvenation Clinic, says that two per cent of women will experience skin irritation from wearing the patch. Also, in about four per cent of them, the patch could come off and they won't notice it. You need to change the patch every week.

USE IT IF ▶ You don't want the daily hassle of the pill, yet are uncomfortable with the thought of getting a device or a vaginal ring.

DON'T USE IF ▶ You already suffer severe migraines or are at an increased risk of developing blood clots.

SUCCESS RATE

98%

NUVARING



WHAT ▶ The vaginal ring releases hormones into your blood through the vaginal wall to stop ovulation. It needs to be changed every week. Launched in 2012, it works like the pill but with one big benefit: the hormones aren't absorbed by the stomach, which means that tummy upsets won't negate its effects. Possible side effects, however, include vaginal discomfort and nausea.

USE IT IF ▶ You aren't squeamish about inserting the ring on your own. Squeeze the ring between your thumb

and finger, and use your other hand to gently spread your labia. Push the ring up into your vagina until it feels comfortable. To remove it, hook your finger through the loop and gently pull it out. Discard the used ring. **DON'T USE IF** ▶ You're a smoker aged 35 and above, says Dr Susan Logan, a sexual and reproductive health care consultant at the National University Hospital Women's Centre. This could increase the risk of stroke and heart attacks. Opt for the copper IUD or IUS instead.

SUCCESS RATE

99%

NOVA-T COPPER INTRAUTERINE DEVICE (IUD)



WHAT ▶ Unlike an IUS, this doesn't contain hormones. Rather, copper ions are released into your womb, which change the make-up of fluids and make it less-than-comfortable for sperm to survive.

USE IT IF ▶ You're buying time between babies or are done having kids. "It works

best for women who have already had a pregnancy, partly because the cervix is open wider, making the insertion of the device easier and less painful," says Dr Ng.

DON'T USE IF ▶ You have heavy or prolonged periods – IUDs can make periods heavier, longer and more painful.

SAY WHAT?!

You've got to be kidding. Of the 90 women aged between 25 and 40 we polled, more than half said their form of birth control was the pull-out method – which has a mere 78 per cent success rate when it comes to preventing pregnancy. This is why they take the risk:

"It's the most inexpensive and easiest way."

"I'm allergic to latex condoms and don't like the pill."

"Sometimes, we use condoms, but it feels strange for my guy, and uncomfortable for me. I thought about getting a diaphragm, but it just seems like too much work."

"I've heard that the pill can increase the chances of developing blood clots, and I'm too forgetful to take it every day. I tried the [contraceptive] jab but gained 7kg, which was impossible to shed."

"[I enjoy the] close intimacy, and there's no need to find protection and disrupt the moment."