

Planned Fatherhood: New forms of male contraception are estimated to hit the market in a few years as researchers keep developing new concepts. And, because of advances in biotechnology the bulk of them are non-hormonal. Research on male contraception is fifty years behind research on female contraception but new findings promise progress. For women, planned fatherhood will be life changing.

An Osaka University study, published in the October 2015 issue of *Science* magazine, raises the possibility of more birth control options for men. Masahito Ikawa, the study's lead researcher, told *Science*: "It is important that we find an effective and reversible contraceptive option to allow men more control over their own reproductive futures."

Dr. Abraham Morgentaler, a member of the board of directors for the American Sexual Health Association stated, "There is a great need for a male contraceptive that does not involve minor surgical procedures or condoms. A simple and effective method of birth control is sorely needed for men."

Being able to control when, and with whom you become a parent is important for men as well as for women. While birth control methods for women have been developed and marketed over many decades, men are still offered two antiquated choices of condoms or vasectomies. While many men don't want to undergo the permanent step of a vasectomy, condoms are not foolproof and in many countries outside the U.S., not widely available.

Writing of reproductive health for the 21st Century, the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, summed up the problem in direct terms over a decade ago. It noted the lack of progress in developing affordable, safe, effective and reversible male contraceptives is due not to the biological complexity involved in suppressing spermatogenesis (the production of sperm) but rather to social and economic/commercial constraints.

Aaron Hamlin, Executive Director of the Male Contraception Initiative, writes that male contraception is coming. But Peter Lloyd, author of the book *Stand By Your Manhood*, writes why the male pill isn't coming anytime soon. Three of Lloyd's reasons with comments follow:

1. Drug companies think it's too risky financially.

To date, all major players in the sector have looked into a male pill but got cold feet at the last minute. But why? "It's to do with maths," says Dr Allan Pacey, Chair of the British Fertility Society and Senior Lecturer in Andrology at the University of Sheffield's Medical School.

In a 2014 interview with Carl Djerassi, the legendary Austrian-American scientist dubbed the father of the female pill, Djerassi said: "This [resistance] has nothing to do with science; we know exactly how to develop [the male pill], but there's not a single pharmaceutical company who will touch it – for economic and socio-political, rather than scientific, reasons."

2. Men aren't demanding it in huge numbers.

Supply if no demand suggests no market. No market suggests no sales. No sales suggest no profit.

3. Many feminists don't like the idea.

One of the other big barriers to the male pill has been feminism.

In the 1970s, Brazilian endocrinologist Dr. Elsimar Coutinho developed one of the first ever male pill prototypes made from all-natural cottonseed. It didn't appeal to major pharmaceutical companies as local health shops could produce a version for half the price. But, justifiably, it also suffered social resistance.

When launched at the 1974 World Health Conference in Budapest, religious groups voiced concern and feminists staged a boycott storming Coutinho's presentation and demanding that only women – not men – should be making choices about parenthood.

But times are changing. Women and men are moving out of clinging to traditional controls of birth control methods. Female barrier methods, even the birth control pill, just like condoms, are quite subject to human error.

In the United States, where most contraception is entrusted with women, close to half of pregnancies are unintended, and around a quarter of pregnancies occur in a month when a woman says she had used birth control.

In one small study of eighty-two women, participants on average missed four or five pills per month, even when they were sent text-message reminders. It may very well be unreasonable to assume that a human being will do the same thing in the same way at the same time every day for forty years. One-third of couples say they rely on the man to provide contraception albeit men's options are the limited and archaic condoms and vasectomies.



In the age of paternity tests and child support, and with fathers and mothers sharing hands-on parenting responsibilities, more men want to be in control of their own fertility decisions. Many men desire to be deeply present in their children's lives. Their perspective on having children also has developed into one that is more like the one that historically has been assigned to women.

Commingleing gender roles and parenting of the conceived child once born have morphed into more equal, mutual, and flexible division of labor between men and women by choice. Late-night diaper changes, storybook reading, transporting children to and from wherever, are no longer seen as women's work, but as parenting.

Many husbands just as wives may not want a full house of kids. They may want one or two or sometimes none. They want childbearing to be intentional and they want to decide for themselves when the time is right to conceive a child.

Longer-acting "fit and forget" contraceptives for the female half of the human race, like IUDs and implants, appear to have radically changed the equation, but so would an improved array of options for the male half of the human race. And although interest in better male-controlled contraception varies widely depending on country and culture, in a wide variety of countries more than half of men indicate they want improved male birth control methods.

The potential of improved male birth control methods has the potential to improve the social, political, emotional, and financial concerns of unwanted pregnancies that often lead to odious abortions, absent fathers, and single mothers coping to survive unplanned parenthood while raising unplanned children.

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Sources: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-health/11646385/Contraception-Male-Pill-is-coming-and-its-going-to-change-everything.html>;
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