

Adult Congenital Cardiac Service

CONTRACEPTION: A Guide for Congenital Heart Patients

Some women with congenital heart conditions have particular contraceptive requirements and cannot use the combine pill.

This guide helps to explain some of the issues and tells you how we can help.

Contraception is important for many congenital heart patients. Some patients will need to avoid certain methods.

 Different heart conditions have different implications for contraception. If you are unsure, you should always talk to your cardiologist or gynaecologist, who will be able to advise you about which methods of contraception are suitable for someone with your particular heart condition.

 Remember that some congenital heart conditions are rare. Your GP may not be familiar with the implications of your condition for contraception and may wish to discuss it further with your cardiologist or gynaecologist.

 The standard contraceptive pill causes slight increase in your risk of blood clots. This means that it is not suitable for you if you have:

- A Fontan, Glenn or TCPC
- Eisenmenger syndrome
- Cyanosis (blueness due to low oxygen levels)
- Weak heart muscle
- Previous blood clots
- Certain heart rhythm problems

 Patients with most other congenital heart conditions can take the standard pill safely, but again it is best to check with your cardiologist or gynaecologist.

 If you cannot have the standard pill, there are other types of contraception that may be suitable for you. These include condoms, diaphragms and progesterone-only contraception. Intra-uterine devices (coils) are suitable for some, but not all, congenital heart patients.

 Progesterone-only contraceptives use a hormone that does not increase the risk of blood clots. This makes them safer for heart patients. When taken as a once daily pill you must be very accurate with the timing of the pill (more so than with the combined pill) or you will lose the contraceptive effect.

This type of contraception can also be given as an injection every three months. Many patients choose this option because it is easier (you don't have to take a daily pill) and it gives reliable contraception.

 Some patients have heart conditions that make pregnancy very risky. If this is the case for you, or if you are sure that you have completed your family, you may wish to consider a long-term option such as tubal ligation, or your partner may wish to consider a vasectomy.

 If you would like to talk about contraception in more detail, we can arrange for you to see one of our family planning colleagues.

FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE OR QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT:

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