

# Women's Health

## IN THE ARMY



### Women's Health and Hygiene Options Information

## Health in the Field

### Take Charge of your Health In the Field

- Use a canteen of water and soap to "spot clean" face, underarms, chest and genital areas
- Unscented baby wipes may be used as an alternative
- Wear a properly fitting bra and cotton underwear
- Take a daily multivitamin
- Avoid wearing makeup
- Never wear contacts
- Drink plenty of fluids each day
- Do not hold urine
- Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement or urination.
- Avoid douching
- Avoid tight fitting synthetic clothing
- Adequate sleep
- Speak with your provider about birth control options and prevention of sexual transmitted infections
- See a healthcare provider if you have a change in vaginal discharge
  - » A change in amount of discharge
  - » Cottage cheese-like vaginal discharge
  - » Foul odor with yellowish, greenish, or grayish white vaginal discharge
  - » Presence of blood when not having a period

### Effects of the Environment on your Health

- Unable to adequately wash or stay clean
- Holding urine
- Difficulty of feminine hygiene during menstrual cycle
- Can lead to urinary tract infections or vaginal infections
- Can lead to changes in menstrual patterns

### Challenges for Female Hygiene in the Field Environment

- Heat, dirt, sand, and dust
- Wearing heavy combat gear
- Port-a-potties (or lack thereof)
- Lack of hand-washing capabilities

### Field Packing List

- Assorted panty liners, sanitary pads, tampons
- One time use baby wipe packet
- Toilet paper
- Baby wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Ziploc bags
- Female urinary diversion device
- Medications for menstrual symptoms (Motrin, Tylenol)
- Contraceptives (if using)
- If issued, a poncho and liner can be used to provide privacy

### Female Urinary Diversion Device (FUDD)

The female urinary diversion device (FUDD) allows you to urinate discreetly while standing up or leaning back. You can urinate with minimal undressing just unbutton your pants.

To order: NSN 4510 014702805: Female Urinary Diversion Device

## Contraception

### It's your choice! Be educated! Be prepared!

- The Army respects the right and desire of each individual soldier with regard to when and how he/she chooses to have children.
- Pregnancies and parenthood status MUST be made known.
- Abortions are not reimbursed by the Army except in cases of rape, health of the mother or incest.
- Military Parental leave policy allows up to 12 weeks of non-chargeable leave following a delivery event
- Soldiers may defer deployment for 12 months after delivery
- Mandatory counseling indicated by command when pregnancy occurs for your health and safety per Reg 635-200

more information on back page

## Birth Control Options

### Intrauterine Device

- Place in the uterus and lasts 3-10 years
- Contains progesterone or non-hormonal option
- **Over 99% effective** in preventing pregnancy
- May experience irregular spotting for the first 3-6 months
- Often stops or decreases menstruation.

### Nexplanon

- Small rod placed in the upper inner part of the arm
- Contains progesterone only
- **Over 99% effective** in preventing pregnancy
- Some women have an increase in bleeding and others experience a stop or decrease in monthly bleeding

### Depo-Provera (The Shot)

- One injection every 12 weeks in the clinic
- Contains progesterone only
- **97% effective** in preventing pregnancy
- May have irregular spotting/bleeding for the first year
- May stop monthly menstruation

### Birth Control Pills

- Take by mouth every day at the same time
- Contains estrogen and progesterone
- **97% effective** if taken as directed
- Regulates periods

### The Patch

- Place patch on skin for 1 week and change weekly
- Contains estrogen and progesterone
- **92% effective** in preventing pregnancy
- The week that you go without a patch, your period will begin
- May fall off in extreme heat/sweat

### Vaginal Ring

- Flexible ring inserted in the vagina and left in place for 3 weeks out of the month
- Contains estrogen and progesterone
- **92% effective** in preventing pregnancy
- Requires cool storage temperature
- May cause an increase in vaginal discharge, irritation or vaginitis

\* Please speak to your provider for more information on side effects such as weight gain, acne, breast tenderness, increased bleeding or cramping, health conditions that may limit the use of certain birth control options.

## Did you know menstruation is NOT necessary for health?

- Common birth control pills can be used to avoid having a monthly period.
- Take the active pills for 3 weeks, and start right in on the next pill pack.
- Do not take the placebo pills (also known as sugar pills or blank pills).
- Do this for 3 packs in a row and then stay off pills for 1 week causing you to have withdrawal bleeding (your period).
- Start the next pack even if bleeding has not stopped.
- This works by thinning the lining of the uterus, which can stop bleeding for months.
- If you get spotting after 4-6 weeks, just stop the active pills for about 5 days to have a withdrawal bleed.
- Don't stop the pills for more than 7 days, or you risk getting pregnant.
- Some women worry that this is not normal, but it is perfectly healthy.
- Types of birth control that can be used in this way: birth control pills, vaginal ring and contraceptive patch can be worn for four consecutive weeks to avoid a period

## Emergency Contraception (ECP)

Hotline: 1-888-NOT-2-LATE

If primary method fails or no contraception is used

- Progesterone pills
  - » Delays ovulation
  - » Thickens cervical mucus
  - » Can be taken up to 3 days after unprotected intercourse to prevent pregnancy
  - » If fertilization has occurred – Nothing happens. (ECP is often confused with the “abortion pill” which is a totally different medication
  - » Available over the counter at military and civilian pharmacies and covered by Tricare

### Alternatives available through prescription

- Emergency IUD insertion within five days of unprotected intercourse is **99.9% effective**
- Ullipristal Acetate can be prescribed for use up to five days after unprotected sex



### Decide + Be Ready APP

Available for Download The Decide + Be Ready App for more information on Birth Control options!

For more information, contact your installation's Department of Public Health.  
*Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.*

### Local Contact information:

