

FAMILY PLANNING

Family planning is the ability of an individual or couple to decide when to have Children, how many children they desire in a family and how to space their children. It is a means of promoting the health of women and families. Family planning is part of a strategy to reduce the high maternal, infant and child mortality and morbidity. Family planning is also a critical component of reproductive health programmes.

The rationale for family planning includes:

- ✓ Allowing women and men the freedom to control the number, spacing and the time at which they have children, family planning helps women and their families preserve their health and fertility and also contributes to improving the overall quality of their lives.
- ✓ Family planning contributes to improving children's health and ensuring that they have access to adequate food, clothing, housing, and educational opportunities.
- ✓ It allows families, especially women, the time to adequately participate in development activities.

Family planning achieves these improvements in health and quality of life very cost effectively compared with investments in most other health and social interventions. Committing human and financial resources to improving family planning services not only improves the health and well being of women and children, but it also supports implementation of the national and international policies.

Thus family planning has been incorporated as an essential integral part of the delivery of health care to communities and the service should be easily accessible affordable and acceptable

- Women, men, or couples can choose from many contraceptive methods to help them plan their family and prevent an unplanned pregnancy. They need to know that if they are having sex regularly

and do not use a contraceptive method, about 8 of every 10 women will become pregnant during the next 12 months.

Different people want different things from a contraceptive method. Some want a method

that guarantees there is no chance of pregnancy. Some want a quick return to fertility so they can get pregnant soon after stopping a contraceptive method. Some do not want to think about contraceptives every time they have sex. Some do not want to depend on their partner for the success of the method. Some women do not want to remember to take a daily pill, while others find that is easy.

TYPES OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHOD

✓ Hormonal contraceptive methods

include oral contraceptives pills, injectables, and implants. They all prevent pregnancy mainly by stopping a woman's ovaries from releasing eggs. Hormonal methods contain either one or two female sex hormones that are similar to the hormones naturally produced by a woman's body.

✓ Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs)

Can help prevent pregnancy if taken within 5 days after unprotected sex. The sooner they are taken, the more effective they are. They are NOT meant to be used for ongoing contraception, in place of a regular method.

✓ Intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs or IUCDs)

Are small, flexible plastic devices that are inserted into the woman's uterus. The most common IUDs contain copper, and they work by preventing sperm from reaching an egg. Depending on the type, IUDs can provide protection for 5 to 12 years.

✓ Barrier methods

Are either devices (male and female condoms) that physically block sperm from reaching an egg, or chemicals (spermicides) that kill or damage the sperm in the vagina. The effectiveness of barrier methods greatly depends on people's ability to use them correctly every time they have sex.

✓ **Fertility awareness methods**

Require a couple to know the fertile days of the woman's menstrual cycle — the days when pregnancy is most likely to occur. During these fertile days the couple must avoid sex or use a barrier method to prevent pregnancy. Breastfeeding provides contraceptive protection for the first 6 months after delivery if certain conditions are met. This approach is called the Lactational Amenorrhea Method or LAM.

✓ **Withdrawal method** involves a man withdrawing his penis during sex and releasing his ejaculate, which contains sperm, outside the woman's vagina. For most people withdrawal is one of the least effective contraceptive methods.

✓ **Female and male sterilization method**

Are permanent methods of contraception. Sterilization involves a relatively simple surgical procedure that provides life-long protection against pregnancy. Sterilization is appropriate for men and women who are certain they do not want more children.

HEALTH EDUCATION/COMMUNICATION

Like other health services, a variety of methods, both formal and informal are used in health education to offer family planning programs. Some of the methods include;

A, Personal Method

Involving a health worker in direct contact with an individual or a group.

- ✓ Have the advantage that the content can be specifically tailored to match the needs of the individuals present.
- ✓ Raise the opportunity for discussion where obscure points can be clarified,
- ✓ Objections raised and doubts expressed.
- ✓ It provides the opportunity for reviewing alternative approaches to the solution of specific problems and there by the community and the individuals can determine how best to put the new lessons that they have learnt in to practice in their own circumstances.

Good counseling focuses on the individual client's needs and situation. Good counselors are willing to listen and respond to the client's questions and concerns. A good counselor:

- ✓ understands and respects the client's rights
- ✓ earns the clients trust
- ✓ understands the benefits and limitations of all contraceptive methods
- ✓ understands the cultural and emotional factors that affect a woman's (or a couple's) decision to use a particular contraceptive method
- ✓ encourages the client to ask questions

In serving clients, it is important to remember that they have:

- ✓ the right to decide whether or not to practice family planning,
- ✓ the freedom to choose which method to use,
- ✓ the right to privacy and confidentiality, and
- ✓ the right to refuse any type of examination.

During talks with family planning clients (individuals, communities etc.) health workers must strive to be effective communicators. They must learn to explain technical information in simple language that is easily understood. They must know the skill of capturing and retaining the

attention of their audiences. Through such interactive exchange, the health worker can learn more about local beliefs and habits

B, Impersonal Method

Other way of forming community in which the communication does not involve such contact,

- ✓ The use of posters, leaflets, and the mass media (newspapers, radio, television, and internet).

The message can be repeated over and over again, serving as reminder and reinforcement. In some communities, materials read in the newspapers or heard on the radio carry more authority than information that is obtained from local sources.