

BIOLOGY

Pills Affect Fertility

► WOMEN may possibly conceive more easily after they stop using birth control pills than ever before.

Dr. Gregory Pincus, director of research at the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, Shrewsbury, Mass., attending the First International Congress of Endocrinology in Copenhagen, said that a number of women tested with the synthetic steroid pills for control of fertility were more fertile after they stopped taking the pills than they had been before. They became pregnant shortly afterward.

The pills have just been approved by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration for prescription by doctors for contraception. Up to now they have been used to treat certain menstrual difficulties.

Dr. Pincus said he worked for more than six years on fertility control by regulation of ovulation. About 1,500 women from the United States, Puerto Rico and Haiti have been tested. The results show that the method has been 100% successful in preventing pregnancies, Dr. Pincus said.

The synthetic hormone that controls ovulation necessary for pregnancy can be taken as a pill 20 days a month. When a woman stops taking it, she begins to menstruate. After the menstruation period, she again takes the pills for 20 days.

Dr. Pincus said that only two or three of about 200 substances seemed worth trying clinically. The substances have now been tested to make sure they do not cause any

abnormalities in the menstrual cycle. By an addition of small amounts of estrogen, the female hormone, the substances not only prevent ovulation, but a more normal menstrual cycle results.

He also said that the hormone tends to shorten the menstrual period, as well as regulate it, and can be used in cases where women have irregular cycles. It is easier to administer than natural hormones that have to be given by injection.

In testing this hormone, Dr. Pincus said, only two side effects have been observed. If the pills were not taken faithfully, the women tended to menstruate sooner.

The other effect was nausea and vomiting, the symptoms of early pregnancy, during the first months the pills were taken. Dr. Pincus said, however, that only about 25% of the women tested were affected this way.

When asked if these control pills held the hope of population control for the future, he said that they would probably be used for some years to come. But new work is being done all the time, he said, and in a few years perhaps another method will take the place of the pills.

He mentioned vaccination as a possible method that might replace the synthetic steroid hormone treatment. He said that such vaccination would probably take place in men and last from one to three months.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Science Planks Important

► SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY are important planks in both the Democratic and Republican party platforms.

The goals of both political parties in these areas are virtually the same, but the means by which each hopes to achieve them reflect their differences.

The Democrats promise to expand energy sources, "water, tidal and nuclear, to supply low-cost electricity to all retail electric systems, public, private and cooperative." The platform makes it quite clear that these programs not only may be aided by the Federal Government, but even may be developed and managed under public administration.

The Republicans pledge the same expansion but want Government to support industry in development and management. Speaking of the development of natural resources, the Republican platform states, "We endorse the contracting by Government agencies for research and urge allowance for reasonable charges for overhead and management in connection therewith."

Both parties recognize the need for pure water supplies. The Democrats advocate emphasis on Federal action in this area.

"The state and local communities cannot go it alone," state the Democrats.

The Republicans favor "strengthening" Federal enforcement powers in combating water pollution. But Federal grants for construction of waste-disposal plants "should be made only when they make an identifiable contribution to clearing up polluted streams."

Both parties favor community watershed projects. Again, the Republicans pledge regional encouragement without "Federal domination." The Democrats pledge a "comprehensive national water resource policy."

The Democrats promise Government machinery for managing land and mineral resources. "Charges for commercial use of public lands will be brought into line with benefits received," they say. Republicans promise "to study the possibility of restoring lands not needed for a Federal program."

Space and the atom will be explored by the Democrats with emphasis on national control and research. The Republicans favor "a decentralization of research into as many centers of creativity as possible."

In these particular scientific areas, credit for progress or the lack of it may be assumed on a truly bipartisan basis, since the programs initiated by a Republican

Administration have been legislated by a Democratic Congress. Whatever each party promises for the future, bipartisanship in Federal action in science has been consistent, except for certain areas in the field of public health and welfare.

This is emphasized by the differences in approach in both parties toward health and medical care for the aged. The Republican party has been committed to a policy which looks upon this problem as mainly local in nature, although it has recognized the need for Federal support. The Democrats favor the use of national machinery.

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AERONAUTICS

NASA Sets Target For Future Achievement

► PREDICTIONS by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration are that the United States will put a man on the moon about ten years from now, fire an astronaut into orbit next year and launch an orbiting observatory by 1964.

Judging by past performance since January, 1959, the target dates for these goals and others set by the Government's civilian space agency may be achieved.

Early in 1959 NASA officials told a Senate committee that eight satellites and two deep-space probes would be launched in 1959, and six satellites and four deep-space probes in 1960.

In 1959, 12 satellites were successfully launched under NASA's auspices, of which one was a deep-space probe.

Five of the six promised satellites have been fired into space, including Pioneer V, another deep-space probe. What is even more important, four of the 1960 U. S. satellites are still transmitting scientific data.

Also promised for this year are close to a hundred rocket soundings to an altitude of about 4,000 miles, and a sub-orbital launch of an astronaut in the nose-cone of a rocket.

There is some inclination to doubt the astronaut firing because NASA's program in this area called for several successful launchings and recovery of animal-occupied rockets. There have not been enough of these to warrant rocketing a man into an earth orbit, it is believed.

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OCEANOGRAPHY

Parachute to Be Used Underwater for Data

► THE FAMILIAR PARACHUTE will take to the sea to aid oceanographers in observing ocean currents in a new project of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. The parachutes will be submerged in several areas about 50 miles offshore. Suspended at depths of approximately 16 and 1,000 feet, the big parachutes will be secured by line to surface floats and allowed to drift with the current. Careful tracking of the floats for a period of 48 hours will provide significant data on direction and speed of deep submarine currents.

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