

OBSTETRICS

Rhythm Method Failure

► THE RHYTHM METHOD of birth control, advocated by the Roman Catholic Church, can fail in 40 out of 100 women because it is not practiced correctly, an American Chemical Society regional meeting in New York was told. These figures were found in specific studies.

Dr. Christopher Tietze, director of research at the National Committee on Maternal Health, New York, reported that two new methods, oral tablets and modern intra-uterine devices, such as plastic rings, resulted generally in no more than one failure in 100 women during a year's time.

Other frequently used birth control methods result in 14 pregnancies in 100 women during a year. The common douche ranks with the improperly used rhythm method if no other means of contraception is used.

Dr. Tietze based his report on numerous studies in the United States which have evaluated the actual use-effectiveness of the various methods of birth control. With 30 investigators, he is studying a total of 8,000 women, over some 55,000 months of observation.

Dr. Anna L. Southam of the department of obstetrics and gynecology, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, said the idea of preventing conception by oral compounds dates to ancient civilization.

Accomplishment of the technique, however, is a development of the last ten years.

The compounds used are generally known as synthetic progestins, or female sex hormones.

What happens is that ovulation is stopped when a woman takes the oral compounds, but fertility returns to normal when the method is discontinued.

The long-term effects of this type of birth control are not yet fully known, Dr. Southam said, and occasional cases of serious side effects can be encountered. Side effects vary with the compound used and with the population studied.

Drs. Sheldon J. Segal and Dudley Kirk, both of the New York Population Council, said major scientific research is underway to find new and better methods of birth control, including those acceptable to all religious faiths.

Dr. Segal reported that researchers had given compounds to animals after exposure to pregnancy. They do not disturb menstrual regularity.

Different investigators have reported at least seven different compounds of three different structural types. Their anti-fertility activity occurs before "implantation" of the fertilized egg in the uterus. In the rat, as in humans, there is about a week during which fertilized eggs are starting to divide as they pass through the fallopian tubes into the womb.

• Science News Letter, 85:109 Feb. 15, 1964

AGRICULTURE

More Meat, Less Wheat

► AS A COUNTRY becomes more industrialized, its people eat more meat, but less bread and rice.

Recent trends in the United States and Britain bear out this basic theory.

A report from England shows that the British are eating more pork and poultry, butter and milk than they did before the last World War—and are consuming 15% less grain.

Almost all Englishmen, even the royal guard traditionally called Beef Eaters, are now eating twice as much pork and three times as much chicken as before the war.

However, they are eating less beef, fish, mutton and lamb, according to a report in Foreign Agriculture, Dec. 30, 1963.

In 1962, the British were drinking 50% more milk than they did in prewar days, and were consuming 46% more milk products. They also were eating more sugar, canned fruit and juice.

In the U.S., the change of food habits during a 50-year period shows the same trend: Americans ate only half the amount of grain in 1959 as they did in 1909. Americans are eating more foods such as milk, meat, poultry, eggs and green and yellow vegetables, while potatoes and sweet potatoes are being neglected.

These changing food habits bear out the

fact that people in an advanced industrialized country prefer fats and protein and turn away from staple grains and rice, states a food economist of the USDA.

Throughout the world, people in less industrialized areas eat more rice, wheat, potatoes and other starchy foods because they are cheaper and faster to produce. But as the country becomes more advanced, grain and other staple foods are fed to livestock, and the people eat the "second-hand" products of meat, milk and other dairy products.

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PHYSIOLOGY

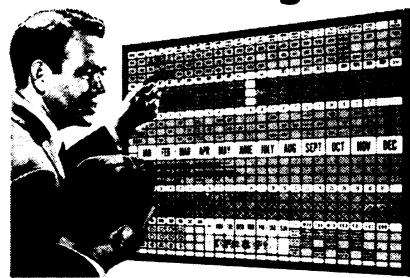
Impotence Blamed On Bad Circulation

► SOME MEN referred to psychiatrists for treatment of impotence may actually be suffering from an insufficient blood flow.

Tests were made by Dr. John R. Canning of Veterans Administration Hospital, Hines, Ill., with an impedance plethysmograph, a sensitive electronic instrument that measures blood flow. He found that a patient with normal blood flow to the legs may still be suffering from a disease or obstruction of the arteries of the pelvic region.

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