

## **Preserving your fertility with contraception**

**Written by Harriett M. Clarke Communication Officer (Writer)  
The National Family Planning Board**

### Introduction

“*Bringing forth a you*” for Jamaicans, is seen as a very important life achievement and a concrete way of defining one’s self and one’s worth. If one is unable to have a child, he /she would be perceived by peers as worthless; the females are jeered and called mules and the men picked on and are said to be “*firing blanks*.” It is this stereotype that men and women often face when their reproductive health is compromised by infertility which very often could have been prevented if they had been aware of the importance of contraceptives in protecting their reproductive system.

Infertility is a very sensitive matter for both males and females worldwide and particularly in Jamaica, as in most societies, in Jamaica the ridiculing or ostracising of an individual when found or suspected to be barren inflicts much psychological damage to the persons self-esteem and self-worth.

### **Common Sexually Transmitted Infections and Infertility**

Based on our culture it may be safe to say that most of us aspire to be fertile, but how many persons are willing to do what it takes to prevent infertility?

Sexually transmitted infections are the primary preventable cause of infertility which can be prevented by abstaining; sticking to one faithful partner and/or using a condom which is 99% effective in the prevention of both curable and incurable STI’s.

Chlamydial infection and gonorrhoea are the two STIs most commonly associated with infertility because of how widespread and easily transmitted these infections are. Many infected persons tend to have no signs, making the infections even more dangerous to a person’s fertility, if undetected and untreated for a long time. The existence of Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) in females is an indication that they may have been infected by one or both infections. Chlamydial infection and gonorrhoea will attack the inner lining of the cervix, and spread to the upper genital tract if untreated. Their presence will cause infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries causing infertility by either blocking or damaging the fallopian tubes. It is usually when the female cannot conceive that screening for one of these STIs may be recommended, at which time the damage done to the fallopian tubes may be extensive or irreversible. In order to prevent irreparable damage to ones fertility, it is crucial for both women and men to initiate screening as screening for these infections is possible in Jamaica for any individual who desires testing for gonorrhoea and chlamydia.

For women, hormone- based contraceptives, especially oral contraceptives containing oestrogen and/or progestin, may also protect the fertility of the individual by reducing

menstrual disorders such as irregular periods, reducing incidences of fibroids, and endometriosis.

Infertility affects about 8 per cent to 12 per cent of the world's population and in about half of the cases, men are either the single cause of, or contribute to, the couple's infertility. The main cause for male infertility is the presence of a Reproductive Tract Infection. RTIs in men begin in the lower reproductive tract (the urethra) and will travel upwards and through the vas deferens (sperm tube) to the upper reproductive tract. Infection here can cause partial or complete blockage of the sperm ducts, and disorders in sperm production resulting in low sperm counts or abnormal sperm. The use of condoms can help to protect a man's fertility and has been known to protect both individuals from exposure to sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. The correct and consistent use of condoms will lower the risk of infections, while screening can identify the presence of STIs.

**Contact: Harriett M. Clarke**  
**Communications Officer (Writer)**  
**968-1631-6**