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For Your Health

New Non-Hormonal Low-Cost Birth Control Device Earns FDA Approval
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Scripps Memorial Hospital Chula Vista Physician Introduces New Contraceptive

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Women now have an innovative new choice in birth control options. The new FemCap prevents pregnancy and will potentially in the future, minimize the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases when used with a special cream or gel (microbicide) now being developed.

Developed by Alfred Shihata, M.D., a Scripps Health physician of Family Medicine at Scripps Memorial Hospital Chula Vista, the FemCap is a new, non-hormonal latex-free contraceptive device. The FemCap was recently granted approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

"The FemCap has the potential to protect against sexually transmitted disease and HIV only when used with a microbicide," says Deborah Anderson, M.D., associate professor Harvard University Medical School and leading researcher of HIV-1 sexual transmission. And adds, "In order for the HIV virus to enter and cause an infection, there must be certain receptors present. The cervix has been found to be the main portal of entry for HIV. The FemCap is an effective mechanical barrier which covers the cervix completely and potentially prevents HIV from entering the cervix only when used with a microbicide."

The FemCap can be worn for up to 48 hours at a time. And unlike similar birth control devices which can be worn for 24 hours at a time and are not as sturdy and durable. The FemCap, which is environmentally safe, is reusable for two years.

"The FemCap is easy to use and free from side effects. It does not interrupt spontaneity or reduce sexual pleasure because it must be inserted before any sexual arousal," says Dr. Shihata. The clinical studies were funded by the United States Agency for International Development. "Women have said it is more comfortable than a diaphragm. It is a method that almost any woman can use."

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