

Your Health

● Real-life stories ● Latest health news ● Expert advice

WHAT'S THE NEWS?

Your monthly update

Ewan and me

Paralysed to PREGNANT



**Ami Ireland, 26
Fakenham, Norfolk**

Despite being unable to move, Ami was determined to be a mum...

Me and my bump



Collapsing on to the living room recliner, I felt like death warmed up.

I was exhausted, and after throwing up, I assumed I'd caught a bug.

I hoped some shut-eye would make me feel better.

However, when I woke up, I was in a strange place being peered at by unfamiliar faces.

Ami, you're in intensive care, a nurse had written on a white board.

I could barely hear and my vision had become blurry, so communication was difficult.

Eventually I learnt that I'd had a tracheostomy, and that I was heavily sedated and dependent on a ventilator.

Feeling petrified, I spent hours staring at the ceiling wondering if I was going to see the next day.

'It was your mum who phoned for an ambulance,' my husband Ewan explained.

Every time he left my bedside to go home, I was worried that I might not see him again.

I was then put into a coma for four days to help my body recover. When I came to, I was

given more bad news.

'You have a rare condition known as transverse myelitis, that's caused extensive damage to your spinal cord,' the doctor said.

It meant I could no longer move my head, upper body or any of my limbs.

'No!' I sobbed, breaking down.

I was paralysed.

Months later, I discovered that it was pneumonia that had landed me in hospital. I shuddered when I was

Me and Daisy



told it could have been fatal.

When I was allowed home, I was completely dependent on Ewan and my mum Carolyn.

They took turns caring for me.

However, despite my disability, I still wanted to fulfil a dream — I wanted to be a mum.

We sought medical advice to find out what support would be available.

Then we decided to go for it.

'If you're sure, then that's what I want too,' Ewan said.

Incredibly, I fell pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl, who we called Daisy.

She was beautiful and we were besotted.

Despite not being able to physically do much for her, I still found ways to be involved.

'Good girl,' I cooed, supporting my arms with pillows so I could feed and hold her.

My mum was a diamond, helping me and caring for Daisy, even more so once Ewan finished his paternity leave and returned to work.

I'm sharing my story to dispel the idea that you shouldn't be a parent simply because you're disabled.

I've documented my journey on my blog, called Undercover Superhero.

Having Daisy has changed my life — for the better.

Please sign!

Pregnancy charity Tommy's has found that miscarriage has a profound effect on both parents, doubling the risk of depression. To sign the petition urging the Government to improve miscarriage care, go to tommys.org/miscariagematters.

Nature's remedy

A study has found that women who consume ginger had significantly less pain during their periods than those on a placebo pill. Try drinking Natur Boutique Organic Ginger Tea, £2.99, for pain relief.



Clever kefir

One in five of us is negatively affected by gut health issues, but you can support your gut with the fermented drink, kefir. Benefits include less bloating and improved mental health. Biotiful has a delicious range of kefir goodies.

DID YOU KNOW? If your name is Tracey or Colin, you're more likely to be a complainer, and if you live in Nottinghamshire, you tend to leave a lot of negative reviews online.



TURN OVER FOR MORE HEALTH



Taking the Pill every day has been a tedious task that's fallen on women since the 1960s.

But how would you feel if you had the choice to hand over the job of birth control to men? Is contraception a 'woman's thing', or would you trust your partner to take it?

Would it set you free or just cause anxiety?

Over 18 months, more than 100 men have taken part in a study, trialling a drug that could become the first male hormonal contraceptive available on the market.

We take a look at how the 'male Pill' works and what it could do for your sex life...



A gel is rubbed into the skin

1 HOW DOES IT WORK?

The drug called Nestorone/Testosterone works by using a progestin (a synthetic hormone that's also used in female contraceptives), together with a synthetic testosterone to switch off a man's natural testosterone production.

The male equivalent of 'the Pill' is a gel that's rubbed into a man's skin daily (across the shoulder blades and chest) to prevent sperm being made in the testes. The result is no sperm in the semen.

Just as with the female Pill, the trial indicated it is reversible. Within a few months of stopping the drug, the sperm production of volunteers returned to normal.

2 BUT COULD YOU DEPEND ON YOUR PARTNER TO TAKE IT?

You may be thinking: *that's all well and good!* But when your fella forgets to pick up the right groceries on the way back from work, how can he be trusted to take something as important as contraception?

Interestingly, the trial found approximately 90 per cent of men did successfully remember to rub the gel on their shoulders every day. So that's an encouraging result for couples who want the opportunity to have more choices for their contraception.



Would you rather be the one in charge?



Estelle and Chris

We asked reader Estelle Keeber, 38, whether she would trust her fiancé Chris Tyler, 39, to use the male Pill

3 HOW WOULD THE GEL CHANGE YOUR SEX LIFE?

If one of the reasons why you use long-term hormonal contraception is to maintain a spontaneous sex life, then there is good news! The synthetic testosterone in the drug ensures that a man's libido and overall physical health is maintained.

When interviewed, a volunteer from the study reported no changes to his sex life, but he did suffer with some side effects, which any woman who has taken the Pill will be familiar with.

He experienced weight gain, mood swings and hot flushes, attributed to hormonal balance being slightly disrupted. Welcome to our world, guys!

She said: 'I can honestly say that, as a woman, it's hard to remember to take a pill every day, on top of running a business and taking care of two sons.'

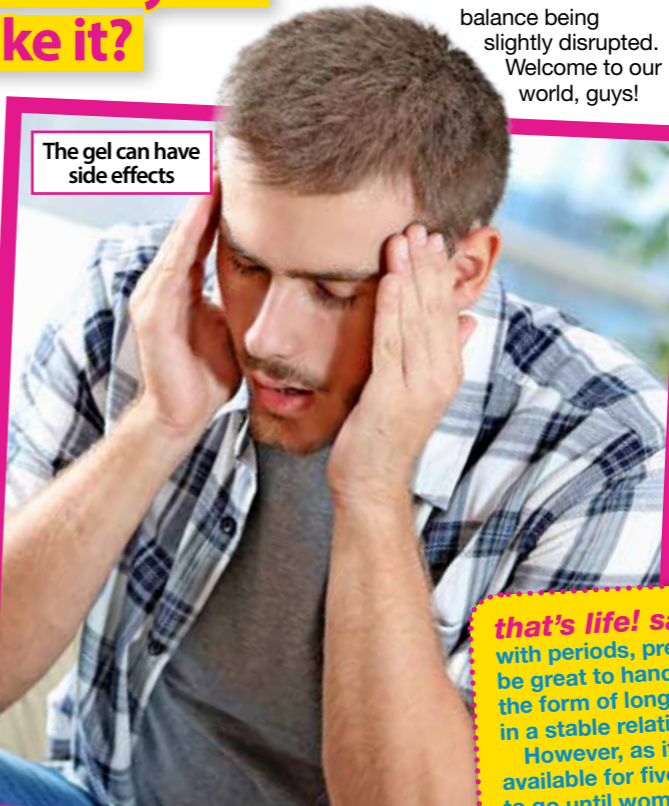
'There is *no* way I'd allow something as life-changing as contraception to be left to someone else, especially a man. Sorry, Chris! No offence, but most men can't remember to take out the bins! I can't imagine there will be many remembering to apply a contraceptive gel every day, and that's without getting started on the side effects.'

'Weight gain, hot sweats... us women will never hear the end of it! I'm not sure whether it's the control freak in me or just the rational feminine side, but I think contraception will remain my own responsibility.'

Chris added: 'Any responsible male would happily take a pill each day to share the responsibility of birth control (Estelle is always forgetting hers!). The practicalities of applying a gel every day are a bit crazy, but I totally agree that men should be taking at least part responsibility in birth control.'

A tough **PILL** to SWALLOW?

The male Pill is here, but would you trust your man to take it?



The gel can have side effects

that's life! says: Women already have to put up with periods, pregnancy and childbirth, so it would be great to hand over some of the responsibility — in the form of long-term contraception — to men, while in a stable relationship. However, as it stands, the 'male Pill' won't be available for five to 10 years, so there is still a way to go until women can achieve equality when it comes to contraception.

Special report

Special report: Clare Mullooly. Photos: Getty/Hallie Easley Population Council/Shutterstock