

[IMAGE]

Oral Contraceptives Increase Stroke Risk?

Oral contraceptives (OCs) containing progestin and/or estrogen are the most popular reversible form of contraception in the United States. More than 10 million women in the U.S. use OCs, although safety concerns have existed since the products were introduced 40 years ago.

Previous research has raised the possibility that OC use may increase the risk of developing serious complications such as heart attack or stroke. This relationship was further evaluated in a literature review in the July 5, 2000 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Analysis of 16 studies revealed that oral contraceptive use was associated with an increased risk of stroke. Smaller estrogen dosages were associated with a lower risk relative to higher estrogen doses, but elevated risk was noted regardless of dosage. These results were apparent even when considering other risk factors for stroke, including high blood pressure and smoking status.

Despite their findings, the authors conclude that although there is a distinct risk associated with oral contraceptive use, "this additional risk appears to be outweighed by the health benefits of OC use in improved birth control." For more information on the benefits and risks associated with prescription birth control (and all medications), talk to your doctor.

Reference:

Gillum LA, Mamidipudi SK, Johnston SC. Ischemic stroke risk with oral contraceptives: a meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, July 5, 2000: Vol. 284, No. 1, pp72-8.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=531&no_paginate=true&no_b=true