

Drug candidates could provide new birth control options for men

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For decades, researchers have been working on "male birth control"—and studies show there is a demand. While concerns about side effects and efficacy have kept such options from the marketplace,

efforts are moving forward, and at least one has the potential for U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval within the next decade, according to a cover story in *Chemical & Engineering News*.

One approach to a [male contraceptive](#) involves using testosterone, alone or in combination with other hormones, to stop the creation of sperm, writes Associate Editor Gina Vitale. A gel using this approach is currently in Phase 2 [clinical trials](#) with minimal side effects so far. But hormonal methods can have drawbacks. One issue is that hormones act throughout the body, making them difficult or impossible to tolerate for some people, and they don't adequately suppress sperm production in all users. And some men may be wary of hormonal methods. Other companies and researchers are hoping to develop nonhormonal methods that could circumvent these potential shortcomings. Some candidates work by targeting proteins that play a key role in generating sperm, while others target proteins that are important later in a sperm's journey, such as those that enable it to swim properly. However, toxicity could be a concern for some nonhormonal methods.

Research has shown that people want sperm-blocking birth control options other than condoms and vasectomies. And the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that the U.S. Constitution does not confer the right to abortion has renewed those calls. With new drug candidates in development, many in the field believe that [regulatory bodies](#) should consider the couple's health in addition to the individual's when performing [risk assessments](#) for the approval of new drugs. Experts agree that it's not a race to see which one will make it to the finish line, and they want to see a broad push to get as many options as possible approved.

More information: "Birth control for men", *Chemical & Engineering News* (2022). cen.acs.org/pharmaceuticals/drugs/contraception/100/i41

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