HIV and complications due to unintended pregnancy are among the greatest obstacles to women’s health and development. New products that simultaneously address both issues could help keep women healthy and allow them to reach their full potential.

**Overlapping Health Needs**

Women's sexual and reproductive health needs do not exist in isolation, and meeting those overlapping needs is essential to supporting women's overall health.

- **Women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS due to biology, gender inequities and cultural norms.** In sub-Saharan Africa—where the epidemic's main driver is unprotected heterosexual sex—women carry nearly 60 percent of the HIV burden. Young women in sub-Saharan Africa are more than twice as likely to acquire HIV as young men.

- **In developing countries, a lack of access to contraception is a major contributor to maternal and newborn deaths,** largely due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Worldwide, 43 percent of all pregnancies are unintended. An estimated 214 million women of reproductive age have an unmet need for contraceptives that would allow them to space their pregnancies, and lead to better health, educational and economic outcomes for women and their families.

- **Women face dual risks.** Women in areas with high rates of HIV often have the greatest unmet need for modern contraception, imposing dual risks for women in developing countries. In addition, recent research suggests that women’s risk for HIV is up to three times higher during pregnancy—and HIV/AIDS is one of the leading causes of death among pregnant women in developing countries.

**Promise of Multipurpose Prevention**

New multipurpose products are now being developed to offer women discreet protection against the overlapping risks associated with HIV and unintended pregnancy in a single product. Some products may also prevent other sexually transmitted infections. Although existing methods such as male and female condoms are highly effective when used, it is often difficult for women to negotiate condom use with their partners. New multipurpose products being developed could give women the range of options they need to protect their health.

**Three-month Dual Protection**

Leveraging our experience developing the monthly dapivirine ring, found to help reduce HIV risk in clinical trials and now under regulatory review, IPM is developing a vaginal ring to help women prevent both HIV and unintended pregnancy.

The three-month ring would slowly release the ARV drug dapivirine and the contraceptive hormone levonorgestrel.

**Integrated Solutions Make Sense**

- Discreet, woman-initiated protection against HIV and unintended pregnancy—and reduced maternal and newborn deaths associated with both
- 3-month duration and dual protection to help encourage consistent use
- Integrated sexual and reproductive health care:
  - Expanded method mix for HIV prevention and contraception
  - Fewer clinic visits and greater efficiency by addressing overlapping needs together
  - Reduced stigma associated with seeking HIV services

Because women's perceived risk of HIV is low compared to their perceived risk for pregnancy, combined technologies may be attractive to many women. Women in multiple studies have shown strong interest in and willingness to use multipurpose rings and other products if proven effective.

The first safety study of IPM’s dapivirine-contraceptive ring began in 2017 in the US, and was led by our partner, the Microbicide Trials Network (MTN). The study found the ring to be well-tolerated, and encouraging drug levels were seen in blood and vaginal fluid. A second safety study in the US, also led by MTN, began in 2018, with results expected in 2020.


