Remote control sperm—contraception innovations

When it comes to birth control, women have long been the party to take on the burden of responsibility. Perhaps not so much because men are opting out, but rather, due to the sheer amount of quick, easy and painless options available to control ovulation.

Hi-tech contraception
Men on the other hand seem to have landed somewhat of a raw deal; vasectomies are painful and not always reversible, and condoms dull pleasure, burst or slip off. But like other aspects of today’s society, male contraception is getting somewhat high-tech — and this time, it could be a case of “remote-control” sperm.

What’s the story?
Professor Derek Abbott and his team from the University of Adelaide in South Australia, say they have invented the first remote-controlled gadget that allows men to control a valve that can switch their sperm flow on and off.

The micro-valve is the size of half a grain of rice, and injected into the duct along which sperm travels from the testes. The valve can then open and close with a push of a button allowing the man to control sperm flow out of the body.

Market demand
Demand for the device has been unprecedented says Abbott.

"I’ve been inundated with inquiries from men from all over the world," he states.

However, before you get too excited about the prospect of the digi-valve, it will need another five years of trials before it can be taken to market.

Abbot and his team aren’t the only forward thinkers when it comes to solving the problem of male contraception. Check out the inventions that may well be common practise in the future...

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Intra Vas Device
The Intra Vas Device (IVD) has been created by the Minnesota-based Shepherd Medical Company and is basically a tiny soft implant that physically blocks the flow of sperm. The implants are easily reversible, painless and should be available in the next two years.

The ring
Californian scientists are working on a rubber ring that encircles the sperm duct. Rather than stop the flow, the ring "zaps" sperm as it travels, rendering them infertile by the time they reach the egg. This ring can be turned off and on, as required.

Injections
Already being trialled in India, this is likely to be the first new male contraception to make it to market. An injectable compound, known as RISUG, blocks the sperm tubes. It's expected to be globally available by 2010.

Allof the weird and wonderful developments in this area begs the question: why no simple male pill?
Well, for those curious, trials into this option did actually begin back in the early 1990s but there were major stumbling blocks, including mood swings, enlarged breasts and hair loss. It's easy to see why a simple condom has, for so long, been the most appealing option.