

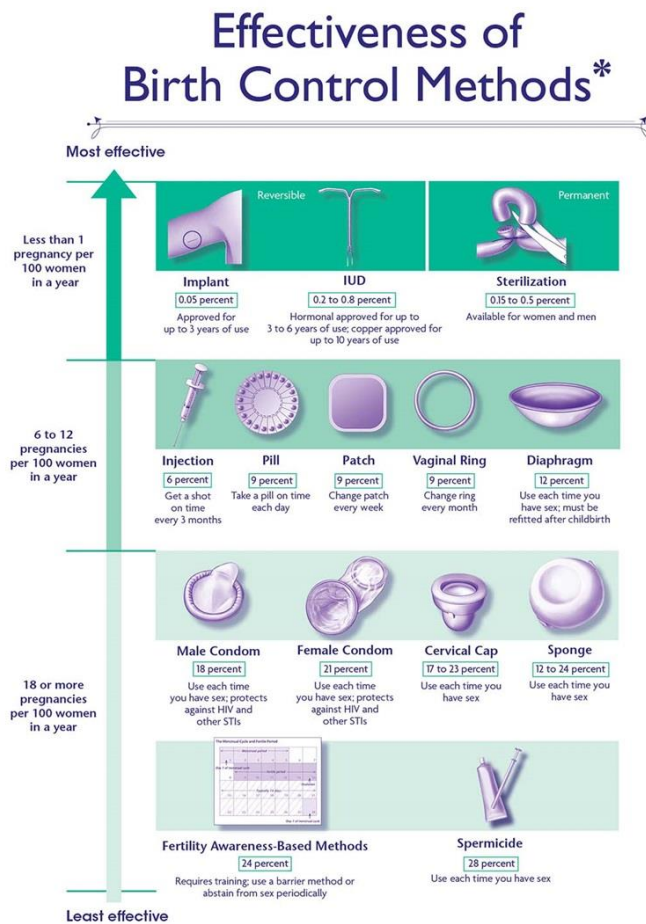
# CONTRACEPTION

Consider the following factors when selecting the best birth control technique for you:

- How well it prevents pregnancy
- How simple it is to manage
- Whether or not you require a prescription to obtain it
- Is it effective in preventing sexually transmitted infections? (STIs)
- Whether you have any health concerns

What are the most effective birth control options for preventing pregnancy?

The chart below illustrates the efficiency of various birth control methods in terms of preventing pregnancy



Abbreviations: HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; IUD, intrauterine device; STIs, sexually transmitted infections.

\*Percentage of women who will become pregnant within the first year of typical use of the method

### Other methods of birth control

**Lactational amenorrhea method:** This is a temporary method of birth control that can be used for the first 6 months after giving birth by women who are exclusively breastfeeding.

**Emergency contraception:** Emergency contraceptive pills taken or a copper IUD inserted within 5 days of unprotected sex can reduce the risk of pregnancy.

**Withdrawal:** The man withdraws his penis from the vagina before ejaculating; 22 out of 100 women using this method will become pregnant in the first year.

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; World Health Organization (WHO) Department of Reproductive Health and Research, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP), Knowledge for health project, Family planning: a global handbook for providers (2011 update), Baltimore, MD; Geneva, Switzerland: CCP and WHO, 2011; and Trussell J. Contraceptive failure in the United States. *Contraception* 2011;83:397-404.

- **Are there any birth control techniques that also protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?**

The best STI protection is provided by a male latex or polyurethane condom. The female condom is also a protective option. To prevent STIs, use a male or female condom in addition to any other method.

- **Birth control pill**

Hormones in the birth control pill keep you from becoming pregnant. You need to take the pill every day, at the same time. A medical professional can assist you in finding the best type for you.

You need to know what to do if you miss a pill. Read the instructions included with your pill package. You should also speak with your doctor.

- **Skin patch**

The skin patch is a small adhesive patch that is worn on the skin that contains hormones that protect you from getting pregnant. Hormones are delivered slowly into your body through your skin. You use a new pad every week for 3 weeks. The patch is not worn during the fourth week, and you will have your menstrual cycle.

- **Vaginal ring**

The vaginal ring is a flexible plastic device that is placed into the vaginal canal, releasing hormones that prevent conception. The hormones are gradually absorbed by your body. It is worn for 21 days inside the vagina, then removed for 7 days. Throughout those seven days, you will get your period then it's time to insert a new ring.

- **Shot**

Every three months, this shot is taken in the upper arm or buttock. It contains hormones that keep you from getting pregnant.

- **Implant**

A health care provider inserts a little plastic rod about the size of a matchstick into the skin of the upper arm. It releases a hormone that prevents pregnancy. The implant can be used for up to three years.

- **Intrauterine device (IUD)**

IUD is a small, T-shaped device that is placed by a health care provider inside the uterus and left there.

Hormonal IUDs work by releasing a small amount of progestin into the uterus. Various brands have been approved for use for 3 to 6 years. IUDs block the sperm from fertilizing the egg. The progestin in the hormonal IUD thickens the cervical mucus, making it more difficult for sperm to enter the uterus and reach an egg, while also keeping the uterus lining thin.

Copper IUDs (non hormonal) are also available. A limited amount of copper is released into the uterus by the copper IUD. It's safe to use for up to ten years. The copper released stops the sperm from moving and reaching the egg.

- **Spermicide**

Spermicides are substances that are placed into the vaginal canal to keep sperm inactive. Spermicide comes in a variety of forms, including foam, gel, cream, film (thin sheets), and suppositories (solid inserts that melt after they are inserted into the vagina).

The use of spermicide on a regular basis may raise the chance of contracting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) from a partner who is infected. Spermicide should be used only if you are at a low risk of contracting HIV.

- **Condoms**

Condoms are available in both male and female kinds. The male condom wraps the penis and retains the sperm after the ejaculation. A female condom is a little plastic pouch that fits over the vaginal opening. It keeps sperm from getting into the uterus.

When combined with spermicide, condoms are more effective at preventing conception. Spermicides should be used only if you are at a low risk of contracting HIV.

- **Diaphragm**

The diaphragm, a small dome-shaped device made of latex or silicone that goes inside the vagina and covering the cervix. To determine the correct diaphragm size for you, a health care expert must perform a pelvic exam. It is always used in conjunction with spermicide. Only use birth control options that require spermicides if you have a low risk of contracting HIV.

- **Cervical cap**

The cervical cap resembles a thimble and is made of thin latex or acrylic that fits over the cervix. To determine the proper size for you, a health care practitioner will perform a pelvic exam. The cervical cap must be worn in conjunction with a spermicide. Only use birth control options that require spermicides if you have a low risk of contracting HIV.

- **Sponge**

The sponge is a spermicide-coated doughnut-shaped device made of soft foam. To cover the cervix, it is pulled up into the vagina. The sponge can be purchased in pharmacies and other retailers without a prescription. Spermicide-containing birth control should only be used if you are at a low risk of contracting HIV.

- **Emergency contraception**

You can use emergency contraception (EC) to avoid pregnancy if you have sex without using birth control, if your birth control option failed (for example, a broken condom during sex), or if you were non-consensual sex. It should only be used in an emergency. Some, but not all, pregnancies can be avoided with EC. When taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex is most effective.

The copper IUD and pills are the two main options of EC. The pills must be taken within 5 days after having unprotected sex and the IUD must be placed by a doctor.

Ulipristal and combined birth control pills are EC options available only by prescription. Progestin-only pills are sold without a prescription on pharmacies to anyone of any age.

To learn more about emergency birth control, visit [Emergency Contraception](#), and [www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com).

## **Glossary**

**Cervix:** The uterus's bottom, narrow end at the top of the vaginal canal.

**Egg:** The female reproductive cell made in and released from the ovaries.

**Ejaculates:** The ejection of semen from the penis at the time of orgasm.

**Emergency Contraception (EC):** Methods that are used to prevent pregnancy after sex without birth control, after the method has failed, or after a rape.

**Fertilization:** A process where the egg and the sperm are joined.

**Hormones:** body-produced chemicals that regulate the activity of cells and organs.

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV):** A virus that attacks certain cells of the body's immune system. If left untreated, HIV can cause acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

**Intrauterine Device (IUD):** A small device that is inserted and left inside the uterus to prevent pregnancy.

**Menstrual Period:** Blood and tissue from the uterus that sheds every month

**Pelvic Exam:** A physical examination of a woman's pelvic organs.

**Penis:** The male sex organ.

**Progestin:** synthetic version of progesterone that is equivalent to the hormone that the body produces naturally.

**Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):** Infections that are spread by sexual interaction.

**Sperm:** a cell that is produced in the testicles and has the ability to fertilize an egg.

**Spermicides:** Chemicals (creams, gels, foams) that inactivate sperm.

**Uterus:** a muscle organ that is in the female pelvic. This organ holds and feeds the fetus throughout pregnancy.

**Vagina:** A tube-like structure enclosed by muscles. The vagina connects the uterus to the outside of the body.