

Contraceptive Care

Your Body, Your Birth Control



Contraceptive care is an important part of the family planning process and can help regulate hormones and menstrual cycles in some individuals. Using contraceptives reduces the number of unintended pregnancies, HIV transmissions from pregnant parents to newborns, and unsafe abortions.

Use this guide to review contraceptive options, and remember to talk with your healthcare provider about what's right for you¹.

Prescription Methods

Intrauterine Device (IUD) | Effectiveness* >99%

A device placed inside the uterus

Potential Side Effects**

- Irregular bleeding
- Pain during and after insertion

Fertility returns immediately after removal.

Note: Hormonal IUDs can last between three and seven years. Non-hormonal (copper) IUDs can last up to 10 years.

Implant | Effectiveness* >99%

A device placed in the upper arm

Potential Side Effects**

- Bruising at insertion site
- Irregular bleeding
- Ovarian cysts

Fertility returns immediately after removal.

Note: The implant can last up to three years.

Injection | Effectiveness* 94%

A shot in the arm, hip, or elsewhere under the skin

Potential Side Effects**

- Bruising at injection site
- Weight changes
- Irregular bleeding

Fertility returns as early as four months after stopping use.

Note: You must get the shot on time every three months for it to work properly.

Pill | Effectiveness* 91%

A pill that is taken at the same time every day

Potential Side Effects**

- Spotting
- Shorter, lighter, more predictable periods

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Note: The pill is available in combination (estrogen and progestin) or progestin-only form.

Patch | Effectiveness* 91%

A patch that is placed on the skin weekly

Potential Side Effects**

- Spotting
- Breast tenderness
- Shorter, lighter, more predictable periods

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Vaginal Ring | Effectiveness* 91%

A device that is inserted in the vagina every month

Potential Side Effects**

- Irregular bleeding
- Increased vaginal discharge

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

*With typical use **Side effects are not all-inclusive

Diaphragm | Effectiveness* 88%

A reusable barrier device that is inserted in the vagina prior to having sex

Potential Side Effects**

- Irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Note: Diaphragms should be combined with spermicide.

Cervical Cap | Effectiveness* 71%–86%

A reusable silicone cap that is placed deep inside the vagina to cover the cervix prior to having sex

Potential Side Effects**

- Irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Note: Cervical caps are more effective for people who have never given birth and should be combined with spermicide.

Over-the-Counter Methods

External Condom | Effectiveness* 87%

A barrier device that is placed over the penis prior to having sex

Potential Side Effects**

- Skin irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Note: Condoms are the **only** method of contraception that protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Internal Condom | Effectiveness* 79%

An internal barrier device that is inserted in the vagina prior to having sex

Potential Side Effects**

- Skin irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Note: Condoms are the **only** method of contraception that protect against HIV and other STIs.

Fertility Awareness Methods (FAMs)

Effectiveness* 77%–98%

Methods that monitor the menstrual cycle to determine when you should abstain from or have sex

Note: FAMs may not be as accurate for individuals with irregular cycles. Effectiveness improves when multiple FAMs are used together.

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Spermicide | Effectiveness* 79%

A sperm-killing chemical applied inside the vagina prior to having sex

Potential Side Effects**

- Skin irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

Note: Spermicide is available in creams, films, foams, gels, and suppository form.

Sponge | Effectiveness* 76%–88%

An internal barrier device that is inserted in the vagina prior to having sex

Potential Side Effects**

- Skin irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility returns immediately after stopping use.

*With typical use **Side effects are not all-inclusive

Additional Options

Permanent Sterilization

Sterilization is more than 99% effective and is available for male and female anatomy. It involves a safe and effective surgical procedure that is usually covered by insurance. While certain forms of sterilization can be reversed, this method is considered permanent. Types of sterilization include **tubal ligation** and **vasectomy**.

Tubal Ligation: For people with uteruses, there are several types of tubal ligation that cut, tie, or block the fallopian tubes to permanently prevent pregnancy. Tubal ligations do not affect the menstrual cycle, and individuals should expect to continue having periods.

Vasectomy: For people with penises, a vasectomy is a simple surgery that blocks sperm from leaving the body. Vasectomies have a low risk of problems and can usually be performed in an outpatient setting under local anesthesia.

Individuals may experience some pain or discomfort during and after a sterilization procedure. As with any surgery, there may be risk of infection at the surgical site.

Emergency Contraception

Accidents happen. If you forget your birth control or have an emergency (e.g., the condom breaks or birth control isn't used), emergency contraception can be a safe and effective way to prevent a pregnancy up to five days after having unprotected sex. The sooner you take it, the better it works. You can purchase emergency contraception over the counter and keep it around in case of accidents. Talk to your local pharmacist or healthcare provider about what is right for you.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>