

Contraceptive Care

Your Body, Your Birth Control



Contraceptive care is an important part of family planning. It can help control hormones and menstrual cycles. It also lowers the number of unintended pregnancies, HIV transmissions, and unsafe abortions.

Use this guide to review your options. Talk with your doctor about what is 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 goes back to normal after removal.

Note: Hormonal IUDs can last between three and seven years. 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 goes back to normal after removal.

Note: The implant can last up to three years.

Injection | Effectiveness* 94%

A shot in the arm, hip, or other place under the skin

Potential Side Effects**

- Bruising at injection site
- Weight changes
- Irregular bleeding

Fertility goes back to normal as early as four months after stopping use.

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

Pill | Effectiveness* 91%

A pill that is taken at the same time every day

Potential Side Effects**

- Spotting
- Shorter, lighter, periods

Fertility goes back to normal after stopping use.

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

Vaginal Ring | Effectiveness* 91%

A device that is inserted in the vagina every month

Potential Side Effects**

- Irregular bleeding
- Increased vaginal discharge

Fertility goes back to normal after stopping use.

Patch | Effectiveness* 91%

A patch that is placed on the skin weekly

Potential Side Effects**

- Spotting
- Breast tenderness
- Shorter, lighter, periods

Fertility goes back to normal after stopping use.

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

Diaphragm | Effectiveness* 88%

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

Potential Side Effects**

- Irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility goes back to normal after stopping use.

Note: This method should be used with spermicide.

Cervical Cap | Effectiveness* 71%–86%

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

Potential Side Effects**

- Irritation/allergic reaction

Fertility goes back to normal after stopping use.

Note: This method is more effective for people who have never given birth. It should be used 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 goes back to normal after stopping use.

Note: Condoms are the only form of birth control that protect against HIV and other 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 goes back to normal after stopping use.

Note: Condoms are the only form of birth control 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 people with irregular cycles. Effectiveness improves when many FAMs are used together.

Fertility goes back to normal 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 goes back to normal after stopping use.

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 goes back to normal after stopping use.

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

Other Options

Permanent Sterilization

Sterilization is more than 99% effective. It is a safe and effective surgery. The main types of sterilization are tubal ligation and vasectomy.

Tubal ligations cut, tie, or block the fallopian tubes. They do not affect the menstrual cycle. You should keep having periods.

Vasectomies block sperm from leaving the body. They can usually be done in an outpatient setting.

Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception can be a safe way to block a pregnancy. It works up to five days after unsafe sex. The sooner you take it, the better it works. You can buy it over the counter and keep it around in case of accidents. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about what is right for you.

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

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