

Birth Control

What is the best birth control (contraception) method for me?

One that can be used consistently and correctly. Consider your everyday life and ask yourself:

- What are the risks and side effects?
- Do I want to be able to hide it?
- Do I care if it affects my periods?
- Will I remember to use it?
- How much does it cost?
- Do I also need for it to protect me from STIs?
- How effective is this method?

Bring these questions with you to your doctor appointment to start the conversation. Don't be afraid to be honest! Your healthcare provider is there to help you choose the best method to meet your needs.

No matter your gender identity, if you are interested in contraception and have a uterus or can become pregnant, you deserve to have your birth control questions answered.

How does birth control work?

Pregnancy happens when a sperm fertilizes an egg that has been released from an ovary, which then implants in the lining of the uterus. Depending on the method, birth control works in different ways to stop this process. It may prevent the ovaries from releasing an egg, it may prevent a sperm from reaching the egg, or it may prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus.

STIs and HIV

The only birth control methods that prevent STIs (including HIV) are condoms and abstinence. Talk to your healthcare provider about how often and what kinds of STI testing are appropriate for you.

Does birth control provide other health benefits other than preventing pregnancy?

Some forms of hormonal birth control can clear your skin and make your periods lighter and more regular. They may also reduce cramping during periods.

How much does birth control cost?

Costs vary for different types of birth control methods. Many types are fully covered by insurance, including Affordable Care Act insurance. Call your insurance provider to find out what types they cover and what your out-of-pocket costs might be. Some public health clinics offer free or sliding-scale fees for this service if you are uninsured or under-insured.

Abstinence

No penetrative penile-vaginal sex. Protects against many STIs, except those spread by skin-to-skin contact. No monetary cost. Requires partner communication.

Condoms

Can be a male condom worn on penis or a female condom inserted into vagina. Protects against STIs. Non-hormonal. Must use new one each time. May break or slip off. May decrease sensation during sex.

Implant (Nexplanon)

Small plastic rod inserted under skin of upper arm. "Set it and forget it": can last up to 3 years. Must be placed by healthcare provider. Hormonal. May affect periods. Reversible.

IUD

Small t-shaped device inserted into uterus. May be hormonal or non-hormonal. Must be inserted by healthcare provider. "Set it and forget it": can last several years. May reduce period bleeding or cramping. Small risk of uterine perforation. Reversible.

Natural Family Planning

Monitoring a woman's fertile time by tracking biological signs as well as calendar days of menstrual cycle. Avoid sex during fertile window. Non-hormonal. Accepted by most religious groups.

Patch

Small adhesive square applied to skin for 3 weeks on, 1 week off. Hormonal. May affect periods. May improve acne. Must be applied on time to be effective. Must be prescribed by healthcare provider. Reversible.

Pill

Must be taken at the same time every day to be most effective. May improve acne. Hormonal. May affect periods. Must be prescribed by a healthcare provider. May increase risk of blood clots. Reversible.

Shot (Depo-Provera)

Injection given in a muscle every 3 months. Must be given by healthcare provider. Hormonal. May affect periods. Must get on time to be effective. Reversible.

Spermicide

Cream, gel, sponge, foam, or film inserted into vagina before sex. Non-hormonal. Must be used each time. Can be messy. Can cause vaginal irritation. Reversible. No prescription required.

Sterilization

Tubal ligation (female) or vasectomy (male). Surgery performed by healthcare provider. Non-hormonal. Permanent, may be non-reversible.

Vaginal Ring (Nuva-Ring)

Flexible plastic ring inserted into vagina against cervix. Left in place for 3 weeks with 1 week out. Hormonal. May affect periods. Partner may feel ring during sex. May improve acne. Requires prescription from healthcare provider. Reversible.

Withdrawal

Remove penis from vagina before ejaculation. Only 78% effective, pre-ejaculate fluid (pre-cum) may contain sperm. Non-hormonal. Requires partner communication.