

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS CONTRACEPTION



A number of contraceptive methods are available. Each person (or couple) should choose a method that fits with your lifestyle, frequency of sex, and personal preference. You will likely use different forms of contraception over your lifetime.



Options include:

Birth Control Pills

- Most common method used
- Very effective when taken as directed (one pill every day at same time)
- Do *not* protect against STDs



Implants and Injections

- Implants, a newer method, use capsules containing hormone placed under the skin on the arm
- For injections, contraceptive containing progesterone is injected every 3 months



Condoms

- Placed on penis before sex to prevent sperm from entering the vagina
- Should use with spermicide
- Help reduce risk of contracting STDs



Diaphragms

- Placed into vaginal canal over the cervix before sex
- Should use with spermicide
- Do *not* prevent STDs



What Is Contraception?

Contraception is prevention of pregnancy by any method.

How Pregnancy Occurs

Each month, approximately 2 weeks after a woman bleeds (menstrual period), the ovary releases an egg (called ovulation). The egg travels to the fallopian tube, which connects to the uterus. If sex occurs near the time of ovulation and the man ejaculates (climaxes), sperm are released into the vagina. Sperm travel through the opening of the uterus (cervix) into the uterus and then into fallopian tubes. If a sperm fertilizes the egg, pregnancy occurs.

How Pregnancy Can Be Prevented

Pregnancy can be prevented in three ways: stop ovulation, stop sperm from getting to eggs in the fallopian tube, and change the uterine lining (endometrium) so it won't support pregnancy.

Pills

Birth control pills, the most common method, contain hormones similar to ovarian hormones and stop ovulation. Use of birth control pills plus smoking, high blood pressure, obesity, or family history of clotting disorders may lead to increased chance of stroke, heart attack, or blood clots.

Implants

Implants are capsules containing a certain hormone that are surgically placed under the skin on the arm.

Progesterone Injections

A contraceptive containing only the hormone progesterone is injected every 3 months and stops ovulation.

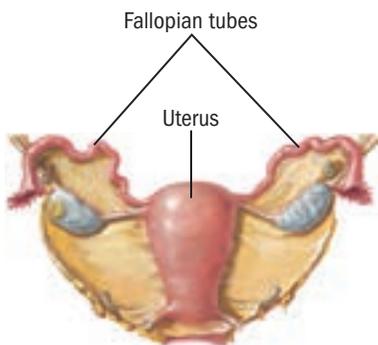
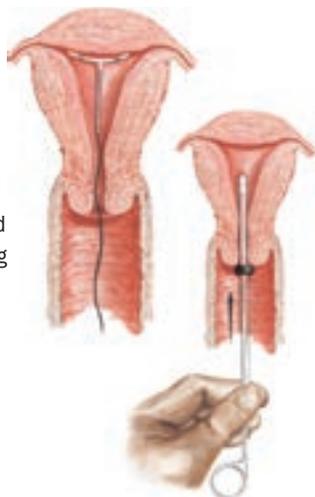
Barriers

Condoms, diaphragms, and cervical caps are barriers that stop sperm from getting to the egg. All should be used with a spermicide (chemical that kills sperm).

A condom is a thin rubber or animal membrane covering that is put on the penis. A rubber, dome-shaped diaphragm is put in the vagina over the cervix. A cervical cap (small rubber cap) fits right on the cervix. It works like the diaphragm but is smaller.

IUD

- Inserted and removed by health care provider
- Replaced every year
- Alters the lining of your uterus and makes it hard for the fertilized egg to attach to the uterine wall
- Not for women who haven't had children, because they increase chances of pelvic infection



Tubal Ligation

- Permanent method, because in many cases it cannot be reversed
- Fallopian tubes are sealed by burning (cauterized) or closed by a clip so sperm cannot get to eggs

Vasectomy

- Permanent method because in many cases it cannot be reversed
- Tubes in the scrotum (vas deferens) are tied off so sperm cannot become part of ejaculate fluid



When deciding on birth control, remember to think of STDs too! Does your method of birth control prevent STDs? If not, consider another one or double up!

Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

IUDs are small devices inserted into the uterus by a health care provider. They change the uterus or fallopian tube so pregnancy cannot occur. The Copper T is a small T-shaped plastic IUD with a wrapping of copper. Another IUD produces progesterone.

Permanent Surgical Methods

The two methods are tubal ligation (tying the tubes) in a woman and vasectomy in a man. A tubal ligation is done by special (laparoscopic) surgery. Very small cuts are made and fallopian tubes are sealed or closed. In vasectomy, which is minor surgery, tubes called vas deferens in the scrotum are tied off.

Abstinence (Rhythm) Method

Not having sex around the time of ovulation prevents pregnancy. This method works only if the woman has regular cycles. It is not recommended for young women whose cycles are still changing.

How Do You Choose a Contraception?

Some couples may use more than one form of birth control. Things to think about when choosing a method include how each is used, age, health, frequency of sex, and partner's feelings about methods.

DOs and DON'Ts in Deciding About Contraception:

- ✓ **DO** think about protection from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) when choosing a method. Certain methods prevent both pregnancy and STDs.
- ✓ **DO** try a new method if you don't like your current one.
- ✓ **DO** talk with your partner to figure out the best method.
- ✓ **DO** talk with your health care provider about the benefits and risks of your chosen methods.
- ⊘ **DON'T** assume that your partner is taking care of it.

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NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Tel: (202) 638-5577
Website: <http://www.acog.org>
- National Women's Health Information Center
Tel: (800) 994-9662
Website: <http://www.4woman.gov>