



WHAT KIND OF BIRTH CONTROL IS BEST FOR YOU?

Department of Health and Human Services
Food and Drug Administration
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What Kind of Birth Control Is Best for You?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is part of the United States Government. It is FDA's job to make sure drugs and other medical treatments work and are safe.

Many Products Can Help Prevent Pregnancy

If you and your partner don't want to have a baby at this time, there are many different products that can help prevent pregnancy.

The types of birth control that are most reliable for preventing pregnancy are birth control pills, injections, implants, IUDs, and sterilization. Of every 100 women who use one of these types of birth control for a year, about 1 to 5 women will become pregnant.

Latex condoms for men and diaphragms with spermicide are less effective. Of every 100 women who rely on them for a year, about 14 to 20 will become pregnant. Other methods of birth control, such as spermicide alone, female condoms, and natural family planning, don't work as well.

Birth Control You Can Get Without a Prescription

Some types of birth control are available without a doctor's prescription. They have no side effects for most people. But some people may be allergic to them and get rashes if they use them.

Condoms for Men

People sometimes call condoms for men rubbers, safes, or prophylactics. You can buy condoms without a prescription at drugstores, supermarkets, and many other places.

To use, put the condom on the erect penis before having sex. Use each condom only once. Most condoms are made from latex rubber. Others are made from lamb intestines and are often called lambskins. Some condoms are made from polyurethane. If you aren't allergic to latex, you should use latex condoms because they are best at preventing pregnancy and they also protect best against AIDS, herpes, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Condoms shouldn't be used with Vaseline or other brands of petroleum jelly, lotions, or oils. But they can be used with lubricants that don't have oil, such as K-Y jelly.

Female Condom

The Reality Female Condom is made of polyurethane. You can buy female condoms at drugstores without a prescription. To use, insert the condom into the vagina right before sex and use each only once. Don't use it at the same time as a male condom. If you have a choice, it's better for the man to use a latex condom because it's better than the female condom at preventing pregnancy and protecting you against STDs.



Attachment 22: What Kind of Birth Control Is Best For You? (con't)

Spermicide Alone

Spermicides are available without a prescription in drugstores and some other stores. They contain a chemical that kills sperm. Spermicides are sold in several forms including foam, cream and jelly.

To use, put the spermicide into the vagina at least 10 minutes before having sex. One dose of spermicide usually works for one hour, but you must use another dose every time you have intercourse even if less than an hour has passed. You should not douche or rinse your vagina for at least 6 to 8 hours after having sex.

Birth Control You Need to See Your Doctor For

The risks and benefits of different forms of birth control are different for each person. So it's best to decide with your doctor which form of birth control is best for you.

Diaphragm

The diaphragm with spermicide is put into the vagina before sex so that it covers the cervix, or neck of the womb. Put the spermicide into the dome of the diaphragm before inserting it. You must be fitted for a diaphragm at a doctor's office or clinic because diaphragms come in several different sizes. The diaphragm must stay in place at least 6 hours after intercourse, but not for more than 24 hours. If you have sex more than once while wearing the diaphragm, you must add more spermicide without taking the diaphragm out. Spermicide is available without a prescription at drugstores.

Cervical Cap

The cervical cap is a soft rubber cup with a round rim that is put into the vagina to fit over the cervix, or neck of the womb. The cap is smaller than the diaphragm, but sometimes more difficult to insert. You must go to your doctor or clinic to be fitted for the cervical cap. It comes in several different sizes. The cervical cap must be used with spermicide, which is available in drugstores without a prescription. You can leave it in place for 48 hours.

Birth Control Pills

You need a doctor's prescription to get birth control pills, also called oral contraceptives. There are two types of birth control pills: "combined oral contraceptives" and "minipills."

Combined oral contraceptives have a combination of two hormones--estrogen and progestin. They work by keeping the ovaries from releasing an egg. The pill must be taken every day.

Minipills contain only one hormone, progestin. They work by thickening the cervical mucus to keep sperm from reaching the egg. Sometimes they also keep the ovaries from releasing an egg. You must take one pill every day. Minipills are slightly less effective than combined oral contraceptives.

Depo-Provera

Depo-Provera is a form of progestin, similar to the hormone in the minipill. Depo-Provera must be injected with a needle into the woman's buttocks or arm muscle by a doctor. You must get an injection every three months for the birth control to continue to work.



Attachment 22: What Kind of Birth Control Is Best For You? (con't)

Norplant

Norplant is a form of progestin that is placed under the skin. Norplant is made of rubber rods that look like matchsticks. A doctor places the rods under the skin of the woman's upper arm, where they slowly release progestin. A doctor must also remove the rods. There are two types of Norplant. The six-rod Norplant gives birth control for up to five years. The two-rod Norplant gives birth control for up to two years.

IUDs

An IUD (Intrauterine Device) is inserted into the womb by a doctor. Two types of IUDs are now used in the United States: the Paragard Copper T 380A, which releases copper, and the Progestasert Progesterone T, which releases progesterone, a form of progestin. The Paragard IUD can stay in place for 10 years. The Progestasert must be replaced every year. A doctor must remove it.

Male Sterilization (Vasectomy)

Outpatient surgery is necessary to make a man sterile, or unable to produce enough sperm to make a woman pregnant. This is done by sealing, tying or cutting the tube through which sperm travel to the penis from the testicles. The operation usually takes less than 30 minutes and is done under local anesthesia. Men who have vasectomies must be sure they will *never* want to father children in the future.

Female Sterilization

Female sterilization is usually a longer operation than a vasectomy, though it may sometimes be done as outpatient surgery. It is usually done under general anesthesia. The surgery involves tying, cutting or blocking the fallopian tubes so eggs can't reach the womb. Women who have this surgery must be sure they will *never* want to have a baby in the future.

Natural Family Planning

This is also known as fertility awareness or periodic abstinence. For this method to work, a man and woman cannot have sex on the days the woman can become pregnant unless using another form of birth control. These days usually include from seven days before the woman ovulates (releases an egg) to three days after she ovulates. A woman can ask her doctor how to tell when she ovulates. This is done by taking into account when the last menstrual period began, changes in body temperature, and changes in vaginal mucus.

Preventing Sexually Transmitted Diseases

The only kind of birth control that is also highly effective in preventing AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases is the latex condom worn by the man. The female condom can also give some protection, but it's not as good as the latex condom for men. If you use other forms of birth control but also want protection against AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the man should also use a latex condom.

Do You Have Other Questions About Birth Control?

FDA may have an office near you. Look for their number in the blue pages of the phone book.

You can also contact FDA through its toll-free number, 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332). Or, on the World Wide Web at <http://www.fda.gov/default.htm>.