

Working with Your Health Care Provider (HCP)

Your HCP can be a good partner in birth control by:

- Answering questions about methods.
- Making sure a method is well suited to your health and age.
- Teaching you how to use the method you select.

There is no one “right” contraceptive for you. You can change methods or try out new ones to suit your needs any time. The choice is always yours.

Talking with your HCP

Tell your HCP what matters most to you in a method (for instance, most effective, doesn't get in the way during sex, lessens heavy bleeding).

- If you want a method that lets you skip your period sometimes.
- About problems you (or your partner) have had with birth control.
- If you (or your partner) have more than one sex partner.
- About any major health problems or allergies you have.
- Your age and if you smoke (women over age 35 and smokers have special health issues with hormonal methods).
- If and when you were last pregnant or had an abortion.
- If and when you plan to get pregnant in the future.

Ask your HCP

Which methods will work well for me, given my age, body type, and lifestyle? And for each method:

- If I can have a prescription for Emergency Contraception (EC), in case I need it later.
- What side effects might I have?
- Is this method safe for me?
- What will it cost? Will my health plan cover this method?
- What must I do to help this method work best? What will you do?
- Your own questions and concerns

To Find Out More

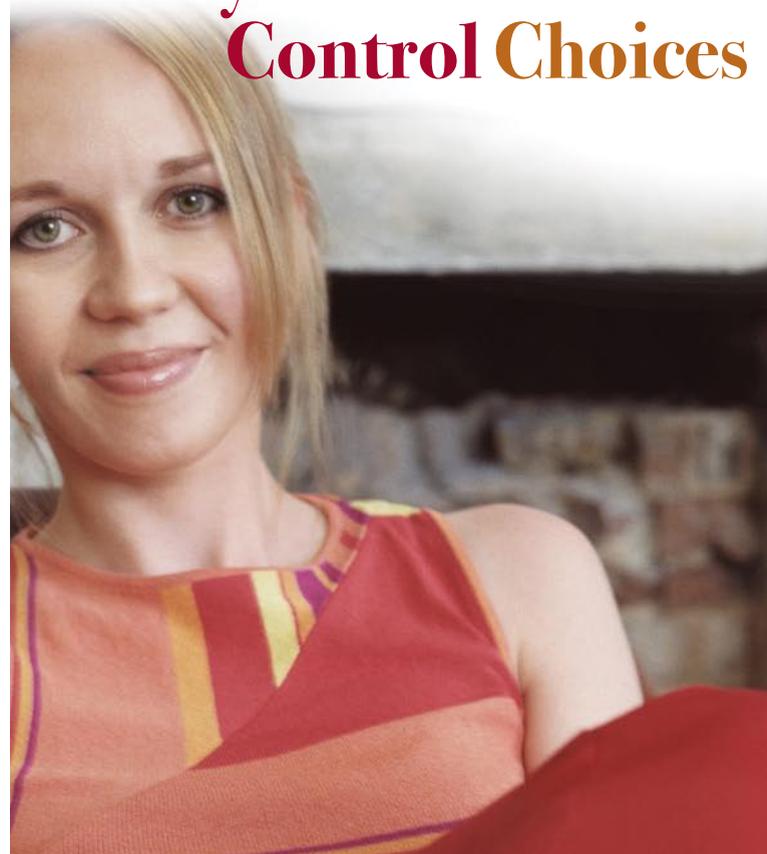
Visit www.arhp.org/contraception. To find out about Emergency Contraception, go to www.not-2-late.com or call the toll-free number **1-888-not-2-late**. (click on health info, then birth control)

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A Woman's Guide to Understanding

Today's Birth Control Choices



Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

Your Choice Matters.

This Brochure Can Help You Get Started.

The purpose of this brochure is to help you think about your choices. The chart that follows reviews today's major birth control methods. Then there's a tool to help you (and your partner) narrow down your choices, based on your unique needs. The brochure ends with some points to discuss with your health care provider (HCP), such as your doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or midwife.

Choosing a Birth Control Method

Today, women and men have more choices for birth control than ever before. With so many safe and effective methods, the choice is yours — based on your health, goals, and lifestyle.

www.arhp.org/contraception



Association of
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Available Birth Control Methods

- Hormonal contraception (shaded blocks) works by changing a woman's hormone levels.
- Non-hormonal contraception blocks sperm from reaching the uterus (womb) or makes it harder for them to travel.
- Self-control methods include not having sex at all and timing menstrual cycles to avoid sex during fertile times.

You can prevent pregnancy up to 120 hours after unprotected sex with Emergency Contraception (EC).

To find out about EC, go to www.not-2-late.com or call the toll-free number 1-888-not-2-late.

Darker shaded areas indicate hormonal methods

Only the female condom, male condom, and diaphragm protects against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

Method	The Basics	Use Each Sex Act?	Note This
Most Effective (99% or more effective)			
Sterilization (male and female)	Having surgery so you can no longer become pregnant.	No	Lasts for life. Some may regret this if they want to have children later.
Copper T IUD	Small device HCP puts in uterus (womb). Protects up to 10-12 years.	No	May increase monthly bleeding and cramping in first few months. May protect against endometrial cancer.
LNG IUS	Small device (like IUD) with added hormone. HCP puts in uterus. Protects up to 5 years.	No	Decreases monthly bleeding and cramping. Protects against some cancers.
Very Effective (91%-99% effective)			
Pills	Swallow 1 pill each day. Protects as long as you take it each day.	No	Decreases monthly bleeding and cramping. Protects against some cancers. Can be used for less frequent or shorter periods.
Shots	HCP gives you a birth control shot every 3 months. Protects for 3 months.	No	Decreases monthly bleeding and cramping. Protects against some cancers.
Patch	Apply stick-on patch to skin once a week for 3 weeks. Then, have a patch-free week. Protects for 1 month.	No	Decreases monthly bleeding and cramping. May protect against some cancers. Can be used for less frequent or shorter periods.
Ring	Insert ring into vagina. Remove it after 3 weeks. Insert again 1 week later. Protects for 1 month.	No	Decreases monthly bleeding and cramping. May protect against some cancers. Can be used for less frequent or shorter periods.
Effective (81%-90% effective)			
Female Condom	Insert into vagina up to 8 hours before sex. Protects for 1 sex act.	Yes	Protects well against STIs.
Male Condom	Put over penis right before sex. Protects for 1 sex act.	Yes	Protects well against STIs.
Sponge	Insert into vagina less than 24 hours before sex. Protects for 24 hours. During that time, you can repeat sex without changing the sponge.	No	Contains a substance (spermicide) that stops sperm movement. Must remove by 30 hours after sex.
Diaphragm	Get from HCP. Insert into vagina less than 8 hours before sex. Protects for 1 sex act.	Yes	Must apply spermicide (see next category) before each vaginal sex act. Decreases risk for some STIs (not HIV).
Moderately Effective (80% effective)			
Fertility Awareness ("natural family planning")	Ask HCP about. Monitor cycle to determine when fertility is likely or unlikely.	N/A	Must carefully monitor monthly menstrual cycle (period).
Cervical Cap	Get from HCP. Insert into vagina less than 24 hours before sex. Protects for 1 sex act.	Yes	Must use spermicide. Check cap is still in place before repeat vaginal sex.
Spermicide	Foam, jelly, cream. Insert into vagina less than 1 hour before sex. Protects for 1 sex act.	Yes	Frequent use can harm vaginal tissue.

Which Method Meets *Your* Needs?

The "best" birth control method is the one that suits your current lifestyle, age, health, and goals. Here is a brief tool to help you sort through your choices.

If you want a method that...	You might think about...
Is easy to use; requires no daily or pre-sex effort	IUD, IUS, Patch, Ring, Shots, Sterilization
Also may protect you from some STIs	Condom, Diaphragm
Lets you conceive again right after you stop using it (is quickly "reversible")	Cap, Condom, Diaphragm, IUD, Spermicide, Sponge
Is highly effective and quickly "reversible"	IUD
Is very private; no one knows you're using it	IUD, Shots
Has only local effects, not body-wide	Cap, Condom, Diaphragm, IUD, Spermicide, Sponge
Is safe to use while breast feeding	Cap, Condom, Diaphragm, IUD, Pills (progestin-only), Spermicide, Sponge, Sterilization
Is an over-the-counter product you buy yourself	Condom, Spermicide, Sponge
Works long-term for women nearing menopause	IUD
Prevents pregnancy after sex without birth control	Emergency Contraception (EC)

To find out more about birth control methods, visit www.arhp.org/contraception