

Quick Reference Chart for the WHO Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use –
to initiate or continue use of combined oral contraceptives (COCs), depot-medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), norethisterone enantate (NET-EN), copper intrauterine device (Cu-IUD)

CONDITION		COC	DMPA/ NET-EN	CU-IUD	
Age	Menarche to 39 years	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	40 years or more	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
	Menarche to 17 years	Category 1	Category 2	Category 1	
	18 years to 45 years	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	More than 45 years	Category 1	Category 2	Category 1	
	Menarche to 19 years 20 years or more	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Nulliparous		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Breastfeeding	Less than 6 weeks postpartum	Category 4	Category 3	*	
	6 weeks to 6 months postpartum	Category 3	Category 1	Category 1	
	6 months postpartum or more	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
Smoking	Age < 35 years	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
	Age ≥ 35 years, < 15 cigarettes/day	Category 3	Category 1	Category 1	
	Age ≥ 35 years, ≥ 15 cigarettes/day	Category 4	Category 1	Category 1	
Hypertension	History of hypertension where blood pressure: CANNOT be evaluated	Category 3	Category 2	Category 1	
	Is controlled and CAN be evaluated	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
	Systolic 140 - 159 or diastolic 90 - 99	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
	Systolic ≥ 160 or diastolic ≥ 100	Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
		Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Headaches	Non-migrainous (mild or severe)	I	C	Category 1	
	Migraine without aura (age < 35 years)	I	C	I	C
	Migraine without aura (age ≥ 35 years)	I	C	I	C
	Migraines with aura	Category 4	Category 3	I	C
History of deep venous thrombosis		Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Superficial thrombophlebitis		Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
Complicated valvular heart disease		Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Ischemic heart disease/stroke		Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Diabetes	Non-vascular disease	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
	Vascular disease or diabetes of > 20 years	Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Malaria		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Non-pelvic tuberculosis		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Thyroid disease		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Iron deficiency anemia		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Sickle cell anemia		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	

- Category 1** There are no restrictions for use.
- Category 2** Generally use; some follow-up may be needed.
- Category 3** Usually not recommended; clinical judgment and continuing access to clinical services are required for use.
- Category 4** The method should not be used.

I/C (Initiation/Continuation): A woman may fall into either one category or another, depending on whether she is initiating or continuing to use a method. For example, a client with current PID who wants to initiate IUD use would be considered as Category 4, and should not have an IUD inserted. However, if she develops PID while using the IUD, she would be considered as Category 2. This means she could generally continue using the IUD and be treated for PID with the IUD in place. Where I/C is not marked, a woman with that condition falls in the category indicated – whether or not she is initiating or continuing use of the method.

* Breastfeeding does not affect initiation and use of the IUD. Regardless of breastfeeding status, postpartum insertion of the IUD is Category 2 up to 48 hours postpartum, Category 3 from 48 hours to four weeks, and Category 1 four weeks and after.

** Evaluation should be pursued as soon as possible.

CONDITION		COC	DMPA/ NET-EN	CU-IUD	
Known hyperlipidemias		Category 3	Category 1	Category 1	
Cancers	Cervical	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
	Endometrial	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
	Ovarian	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
Cervical ectropion		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Breast disease	Undiagnosed mass	**	**	Category 1	
	Family history of cancer	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Current cancer	Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Uterine fibroids without cavity distortion		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Endometriosis		Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Trophoblast disease (malignant gestational)		Category 1	Category 1	Category 4	
Vaginal bleeding patterns	Irregular without heavy bleeding	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Heavy or prolonged, regular and irregular	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Unexplained bleeding	Category 2	Category 3	I	C
Cirrhosis	Mild	Category 3	Category 2	Category 1	
	Severe	Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
Current symptomatic gall bladder disease		Category 3	Category 2	Category 1	
Cholestasis	Related to the pregnancy	Category 2	Category 1	Category 1	
	Related to oral contraceptives	Category 3	Category 2	Category 1	
Hepatitis	Active	Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
	Client is a carrier	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Liver tumors		Category 4	Category 3	Category 1	
STIs/PID	Current purulent cervicitis, chlamydia, gonorrhea	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
	Vaginitis	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Current pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
	Other STIs (excluding HIV/hepatitis)	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Increased risk of STIs	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Very high individual risk of exposure to STIs	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
HIV	High risk of HIV or HIV-infected	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
AIDS	No antiretroviral therapy (ARV)	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
	Not clinically well on ARV therapy	Category 1	Category 1	I	C
	Clinically well on ARV therapy	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
Use of:	Griseofulvin	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	
	Rifampicin	Category 3	Category 2	Category 1	
	Other antibiotics	Category 1	Category 1	Category 1	

Source: Adapted from Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use. Geneva: World Health Organization. Third edition, 2004. Available: <http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/MEC/>

