

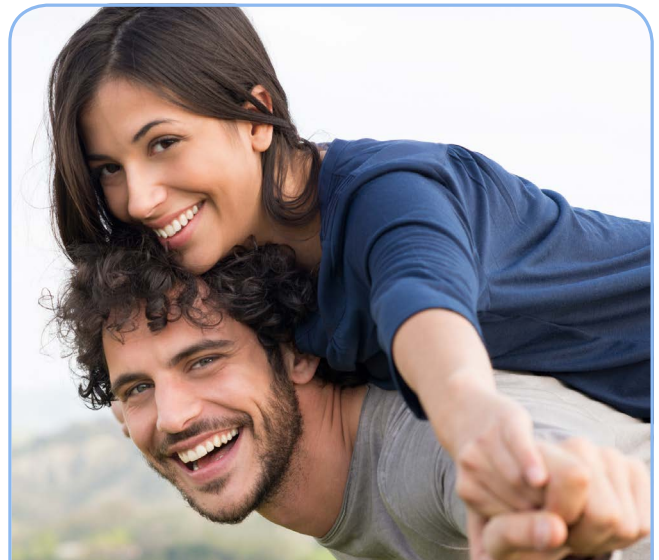
Birth Control Basics

If you're sexually active (or you plan to be soon) and don't want to become pregnant, you'll need to choose a method of birth control (**contraception**). There are many different kinds of birth control. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. To help you choose, this handout presents some basic information and answers some common questions about the most popular forms of birth control.

Choosing a method

Review this handout with your healthcare provider, keeping these features in mind:

- **Comfort and ease.** Would I feel comfortable using it? Would it be easy to get? Would it be easy for me to use correctly?
- **Effective.** How well does this method work to prevent pregnancy? How concerned am I about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and does this method help protect against them? Could it be combined with another method to be more effective in preventing pregnancy and STIs?
- **Safe.** Do I have any health conditions, risk factors, or allergies that rule out this option for me? What risks or health benefits might this method provide?
- **Affordable.** Can I afford to use this method? Is it covered by my medical insurance?



Almost half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. To avoid getting pregnant when you're not ready, choose a birth control method that works for your lifestyle and health needs.

Myths and facts and birth control

Myth: A woman can't get pregnant when having sex during her period.


Fact: Unprotected sex can lead to pregnancy at any time. A woman might be less likely to get pregnant when bleeding, but it can still happen. Women ovulate at different times and sometimes bleed when they're not having their period. Also, sperm can last for several days inside the vagina.

Myth: A woman can't get pregnant when breastfeeding.

Fact: Breastfeeding is NOT a form of birth control. Also, it's not always possible to know when fertility has returned after childbirth. (It may return long before a woman's period starts up again.)

Myth: Women need to take a break from the pill.

Fact: There is no reason to stop using the pill (or any other method of birth control) unless you want to get pregnant, are switching methods, or are no longer having sex.

BIRTH CONTROL METHOD	EFFECTIVENESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Birth control pill (“the pill,” oral contraceptives) Vaginal ring (NuvaRing vaginal insert) Birth control patch (Ortho Evra patch)</p> <p>All of these methods contain hormones. When used as directed, they prevent pregnancy by stopping the release of an egg from your ovaries (ovulation). These methods are only available by prescription.</p> <p>There are several different types and brands of birth control pills.</p> 	<p>91% to 99% effective when taken correctly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These methods are 91% to 99% effective when taken correctly. • Some of these methods may offer health benefits such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acne control – Lighter, less painful periods – Fewer symptoms of PMS (premenstrual syndrome) – Fewer migraines related to periods – Less risk of certain cancers and infections – Protection against thinning bones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). • Require sticking to a schedule. The pill usually must be taken daily. Vaginal rings and birth control patches must be replaced at regular intervals. • May bring side effects such as sore breasts, nausea, headaches, and weight gain. • May interact with other medicines. • May decrease your milk supply for breastfeeding (less likely if breastfeeding is well established). • May increase your risk of stroke if you get migraines with auras (vision changes). • Should not be used by smokers over age 35 because of increased risk for heart attack, blood clot, and stroke (increases risk very slightly for other women).
<p>Condom (rubbers, prophylactics)</p> <p>Condoms block sperm from entering your body. Before sex, the condom is placed over the man’s erect penis, covering it in a thin layer of latex, plastic, or animal tissue. Many condoms are coated with spermicide, which increases protection against pregnancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% when used alone • 86% to 98% effective when used with a spermicide • Nearly 100% effective when combined with withdrawal method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can buy condoms without a prescription at grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, and some vending machines. • Condoms give some protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) chlamydia, and gonorrhea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires cooperation of male partner. • May break. • Not “spontaneous.” (A condom must be put on immediately before sex.) • Males may feel less sensation during sex.

Ask your healthcare provider for a copy of the Intermountain fact sheet: ***Birth Control Pills: 5 Things You Need to Know***

BIRTH CONTROL METHOD	EFFECTIVENESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Diaphragm</p> <p>The diaphragm is a small rubber cup that you place inside your vagina. It holds spermicide against your cervix and prevents sperm from reaching an egg.</p> <p>Initially, your healthcare provider must fit you with a diaphragm. Once you have the proper size of diaphragm, you'll need to put it into your vagina before sex.</p>	<p>84% to 94% effective when used properly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can put your diaphragm in up to 6 hours before you have sex. This method doesn't affect your hormone levels and can be used while breastfeeding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Can be difficult or uncomfortable to place. Cannot be left in place more than 24 hours. Increases risk of urinary tract, bladder, and vaginal infections. Increases risk of developing allergies to spermicide or latex. For repeated sex, requires reapplication of spermicide. Must be replaced once a year or if you gain or lose more than 10 pounds.
<p>IUD (intrauterine device)</p> <p>This is a small plastic device that your healthcare provider inserts into your uterus, where it stays for months or years.</p> <p>Copper or hormones in the IUD keep sperm from joining the egg or may keep fertilized eggs from implanting in the uterus.</p>	<p>99% or greater</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the IUD is placed, you don't need to remember birth control daily. Copper IUDs provide continuous contraception for up to 10 years. IUDs with hormones may reduce menstrual cramps and flow. They may be left in place for up 3 to 5 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). May come out or poke through the uterus (rare). Copper IUD may cause problems with menstruation (cramps, spotting between periods, heavier and longer periods). May cost more than other options.
<p>Periodic abstinence (natural family planning, the "rhythm method")</p> <p>This method means that you and your partner avoid sex during the fertile period of your menstrual cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not very reliable Results are dependent on the couple's knowledge of the woman's cycle and careful planning More reliable when used with a condom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You don't need to visit a doctor or buy anything. There are no side effects with this method. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Requires careful planning and knowledge about the woman's reproductive cycle. Requires abstinence (no sex) for half of your cycle (it can be difficult to know when you are and aren't fertile). Is not recommended for women with irregular cycles.

BIRTH CONTROL METHOD	EFFECTIVENESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Surgical sterilization</p> <p>Surgical methods are permanent. They prevent pregnancy by blocking the passage of the egg in the woman's body (tubal ligation surgery) or sperm in the man's body (vasectomy).</p>	99% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides continuous, permanent contraception. You don't need to think about birth control at all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Risk of surgical complication. Is permanent. (If you change your mind, it may not be reversible.) Carries a small risk of abnormal bleeding (for women).
<p>Time-release hormone implants and injections</p> <p>Time-release hormones are prescribed by your healthcare provider. For a period of weeks to years (depending on the type), they prevent pregnancy by stopping your ovaries from releasing eggs.</p>	94% to 99% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most types can be used while breastfeeding once your milk supply is well established. Implants and injections last longer than a daily pill. These can be used by women who can't take estrogen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). May decrease breast milk supply. May cause side effects such as headache or period problems. May delay your return to fertility.
<p>Withdrawal</p> <p>This method requires the man to remove (withdraw) his penis from the woman's vagina before reaching orgasm and ejaculation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unreliable Sperm is in semen, which can leak out before ejaculation 	You can use this method when no other method is available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Requires excellent self-control and experience on the man's part. Requires trust on the woman's part.



Questions for my doctor

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