



Birth Control Options

A number of birth control methods are available that work in different ways to prevent pregnancy. This table provides a breakdown of the methods by category: hormonal, barrier, and other. For each method the table details how it works, its effectiveness in preventing pregnancy, and its benefits and drawbacks.

Birth Control Method	Description	Effectiveness In Preventing Pregnancy	Benefits	Risks or Possible Problems
Birth Control Pill <i>(hormonal)</i>	Prescription drug containing female sex hormones; a woman takes one pill daily for 21 days; prevents ovaries from releasing an egg, thickens cervical mucus to keep sperm from reaching an egg, and/or prevents the lining of the uterus from thickening so that a fertilized egg can not implant	95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More regular periods, reduced cramping, and less severe symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), such as headache, fatigue and irritability • No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity • Some protection against ovarian and endometrial cancer, noncancerous breast tumors and ovarian cysts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) • Rare but dangerous complications including blood clotting and hypertension, particularly in women over 35 years who smoke • Must be taken daily
Contraceptive Injection <i>(hormonal)</i>	Hormonal injection given by a healthcare professional in a woman's arm or buttocks; prevents ovaries from releasing an egg, thickens cervical mucus to keep sperm from reaching an egg, and/or prevents the lining of the uterus from thickening so that a fertilized egg can not implant	99%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity • Effective for one to three months, depending on type used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Requires regular visits to a healthcare professional to administer injection • May cause irregular bleeding, weight gain, sore breasts, nausea and acne
Contraceptive Patch <i>(hormonal)</i>	Skin patch worn by a woman for 21 days on the buttocks, stomach or upper torso; releases low doses of female sex hormones; prevents ovaries from releasing an egg, thickens cervical mucus to keep sperm from reaching an egg, and/or prevents the lining of the uterus from thickening so that a fertilized egg can not implant	95% to 99%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity • Regular use may result in shorter, more regular menstrual periods, while also decreasing premenstrual cramping and menstrual-related iron deficiency and acne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Rare but dangerous complications, including blood clotting and hypertension, particularly in women over 35 years who smoke • Some medications, including antibiotics and anti-seizure, tuberculosis, and migraine drugs, can interfere with effectiveness



Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

Birth Control Method	Description	Effectiveness In Preventing Pregnancy	Benefits	Risks or Possible Problems
Contraceptive Ring <i>(hormonal)</i>	Flexible ring inserted into a woman's vagina for 21 days; releases low doses of female sex hormones; prevents ovaries from releasing an egg, thickens cervical mucus to keep sperm from reaching an egg, and/or prevents the lining of the uterus from thickening so that a fertilized egg can not implant	95% to 99%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity Regular use may result in shorter, more regular menstrual periods, while also decreasing premenstrual cramping and menstrual-related acne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not effective against STI transmission May cause vaginal irritation and discharge May cause irregular bleeding, weight gain or loss, breast tenderness, nausea, vomiting, headache, and mood change
Hormonal Implant <i>(hormonal)</i>	Six small capsules inserted by a healthcare professional under the skin of a woman's upper arm; delivers small amounts of sex hormones to prevent ovaries from releasing an egg	99.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most effective form of birth control after continuous abstinence and sterilization surgery Protects against pregnancy for up to five years No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not effective against STI transmission Possible scarring, or rarely, infection at injection site May cause irregular bleeding, headache, nausea, depression
Emergency Contraception <i>(hormonal)</i>	Method used by a woman after unprotected intercourse to prevent fertilization of the egg or implantation of the fertilized egg in the uterus. Two methods are available: emergency contraceptive pills or emergency insertion of an intrauterine device (IUD)	Emergency contraceptive pills: 79% to 85% if taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse IUD: 99% if inserted within 7 days of unprotected intercourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents pregnancy when primary birth control fails during sex (for instance, if condom breaks or diaphragm or cervical cap dislodges); one or more birth control pills are skipped; or a woman is forced to have unprotected vaginal intercourse against her will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not effective against STI transmission Needs to be prescribed by a healthcare professional if under 18 years of age
Cervical Cap <i>(barrier)</i>	Thimble-shaped latex cap inserted into a woman's vagina over cervix to prevent sperm from entering uterus; used with spermicide	80% in women who have not given birth 60% in women who have given birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reusable Can last for one to two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not effective against transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) Needs to be fitted by a healthcare professional Difficult to fit women with an unusual cervix size Difficult for some women to insert



Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

Birth Control Method	Description	Effectiveness In Preventing Pregnancy	Benefits	Risks or Possible Problems
Diaphragm (barrier)	Shallow rubber cup with flexible rim inserted into a woman's vagina over cervix to prevent sperm from entering uterus; used with spermicide	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reusable • Can last for one to two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Needs to be fitted by a healthcare professional • Must be inserted before each act of sexual intercourse
Female condom (barrier)	Polyurethane sac inserted into a woman's vagina over cervix to prevent sperm from entering uterus; may be used with spermicide	79%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the risk of many STIs • Available over-the-counter • Inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessens sensation • May break during intercourse
Male condom (barrier)	Sheath of latex, polyurethane, or animal tissue placed on erect penis; may be used with spermicide.	85% - 90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latex and polyurethane condoms reduce the risk of many STIs • Available over-the-counter • Inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal skin condoms are not effective against STI • Lessens sensation • May break during intercourse
Spermicide (barrier)	Sperm-killing chemicals in the form of foams, creams, jellies, films, or suppositories that are inserted into a woman's vagina to block the cervix, preventing sperm from fertilizing an egg	70% - 80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available over-the-counter • Can be used with other methods to improve effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only partially effective against STI transmission • Possible allergies or irritation
Fertility Awareness Methods (other)	Collection of techniques used by a woman, including checking body temperature or cervical mucus daily or recording menstrual cycles on a calendar, to determine the days when the body is most fertile; abstinence or the use of a barrier method during this fertile period can prevent pregnancy	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No medical or hormonal side effects • Inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Requires commitment to consistently and accurately monitor fertility • More than one fertility awareness method should be used to improve effectiveness



Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

Birth Control Method	Description	Effectiveness In Preventing Pregnancy	Benefits	Risks or Possible Problems
Intrauterine Device (IUD) <i>(other)</i>	Small device inserted by a healthcare professional into a woman's uterus; prevents eggs from being fertilized and/or implanting in uterus	96%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective one to ten years, depending on type used • No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits spontaneity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Possible scarring, or rarely, infection at insertion site • May cause spotting in between periods, and cramping • Rare risk of uterine perforation or ectopic pregnancy
Tubal Sterilization <i>(other)</i>	Surgical procedure to permanently block a woman's fallopian tubes to prevent eggs from reaching sperm	99.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanently prevents pregnancy • No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Reactions to surgery may include infection, bleeding, injury to intestine, reaction to anesthesia • Increased chance of ectopic pregnancy • Generally irreversible
Vasectomy <i>(other)</i>	Surgical procedure to permanently block a male's vas deferens (sperm duct) to prevent sperm from reaching eggs	99.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanently prevents pregnancy • No action required prior to sexual intercourse, permits sexual spontaneity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective against STI transmission • Reactions to surgery may include infection, blood clot near testes, bruising, swelling or tenderness of scrotum • Generally irreversible