

Family Planning

Birth Control

You can get pregnant again as soon as you start having sex after giving birth – even if your period hasn’t started yet.

When you’re deciding on a method of birth control, think about:

- how well it works
- whether it affects breastfeeding
- how easy it is to use
- its cost
- whether it protects against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)



DID YOU KNOW

Breastfeeding may be up to 98% effective as birth control when **all** of the following are true:

- your baby is under 6 months old
- you’re breastfeeding your baby at every feeding
- your period hasn’t returned

Remember, though, that breastfeeding on its own shouldn’t be relied on to prevent pregnancy.



DID YOU KNOW

Withdrawal (pulling the penis out before ejaculation) is NOT an effective method of birth control. Neither is douching or rinsing the vagina after sex.

MOST EFFECTIVE Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
IUS (progesterone-releasing intrauterine system) Small t-shaped device inserted and left in the uterus	About 1 in 1,000 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more effective than sterilization • fertility returns as soon as it’s removed • can be left in for 5-7 years • makes periods lighter and less crampy, without changing natural hormonal cycles • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first 3-4 periods may be extra heavy and crampy • may stop periods • no protection from STIs • can be expensive to purchase (but has no monthly cost)
IUD (copper intrauterine device) Small t-shaped device inserted and left in the uterus	Less than 2 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be left in for up to 10 years • fertility returns as soon as it’s removed • safe while breastfeeding • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • less expensive than an IUS but almost as effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may make periods heavier or more painful • no protection from STIs
Sterilization Vasectomy – cutting and sealing the tubes that carry sperm Tubal occlusion (“tubes tied”) – cutting or blocking the tubes that carry eggs	Vasectomy: less than 1½ in 1,000 pregnancies within a year Tubes tied: up to 2 in 1,000 pregnancies within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paid for by MSP • vasectomy requires no hospital stay • tubes can be tied during caesarean • safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small chance of complications from surgery • permanent • no protection from STIs

VERY EFFECTIVE Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
Depo-Provera® Hormone injection given every 12 weeks	About 4 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may make periods lighter or stop them • safe while breastfeeding • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may cause irregular periods, depression, weight gain • no protection from STIs • may weaken bones • may take 1-2 years to get pregnant after use
Oral contraceptive pill ("the pill") Daily hormone prescription pill	About 7 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • may make periods more regular • may lower the risk of some cancers • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may cause weight gain, headache and nausea • may increase risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke • may not work if taking other medicines • no protection from STIs • in rare cases, may lower your milk supply • must be taken daily
Progesterone-only oral contraceptive pill Daily hormone prescription pill	If you are exclusively breastfeeding: about 2 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year If you are not exclusively breastfeeding: higher rate of failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • no decrease to milk supply • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher chance of getting pregnant again if you are not exclusively breastfeeding • may not work if taking other medicines • no protection from STIs • must be taken daily
Contraceptive patch Hormone patch worn on the skin	About 7 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • may make periods more regular • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can come off; must check daily • must replace weekly • may increase risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke • may cause weight gain, headache and nausea • no protection from STIs • may lower your milk supply • much less effective for people over 90 kg (200 lb)
Vaginal ring Hormone-releasing ring inserted into the vagina each month	About 7 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective for users of all weights • inserted by user and remains in place for 3 weeks • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be awkward to insert • may increase risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke • may cause weight gain and headache • may lower your milk supply • no protection from STIs

LEAST EFFECTIVE Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
Condom Sheath worn over the penis	Up to 13 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no prescription needed protects against most STIs safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can slip off or break can cause allergic reaction
Diaphragm / cervical cap Cover for the uterus inserted through the vagina	Up to 16 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can last several years can be put in up to 6 hours before sex safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> must be fitted by a doctor and refitted after pregnancy or weight change may be hard to insert must be used with spermicide, which can cause allergic reaction risk of bladder infection can't be used during period no protection against STIs
Female condom Sheath inserted into the vagina	Up to 21 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no prescription needed protects against most STIs safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can be hard to insert can be noisy in use can be expensive
Fertility awareness Tracking your menstrual cycle to figure out when you're able to get pregnant	Up to 24 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low cost teaches about fertility patterns safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> menstrual cycle must be regular may not work while breastfeeding must carefully monitor cycle at times, must avoid sex or use another method no protection from STIs
Vaginal spermicide Medication inserted into the vagina. Best used with another method, like condoms	Up to 30 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no prescription needed adds lubrication safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can cause allergic reaction must be inserted 15-20 minutes before sex only works for an hour may increase chance of STIs

EMERGENCY Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
Emergency contraceptive pills	<p>Ulipristal acetate (Ella One®) – Up to 3 in 100 users will get pregnant if taken within 5 days</p> <p>Plan B® – Up to 5 in 100 users will get pregnant if taken within 72 hours</p> <p>Yuzpe (Ovral®) – Up to 6 in 100 users will get pregnant if taken within 24 hours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be used up to 5 days after sex if another method has failed • 1 dose will not likely affect breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may cause nausea and vomiting • may disrupt your period • no protection from STIs
Copper IUD	Less than 1 in 100 users will get pregnant if inserted within 7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be placed up to 7 days after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy • very effective for up to 10 years • safe while breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may make period heavier or more painful • may be difficult to find a health care provider to insert it within 7 days • no protection from STIs

For more information, talk with your health care provider, or contact Options for Sexual Health at 1-800-739-7367 or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.



DID YOU KNOW

Sex can happen whenever you're healed and you and your partner feel ready. If it's uncomfortable, try a warm bath, a water-soluble lubricant and plenty of foreplay.

