

Facts about Methods of Contraception

Based on information from Planned Parenthood.

Methods	What it is	Effectiveness	Advantages	Problems
The Pill	A monthly series of birth control pills with ingredients similar to hormones normally produced in a woman's body. Most keep the ovaries from releasing eggs when taken regularly.	Of 100 women on the pill, about 2 may become pregnant during the first year of actual use. Women who never forget to take the pill on a daily basis have less chance of getting pregnant.	A highly effective method, and convenient to use. Periods are more regular, with less cramps and less blood loss. There is less iron deficiency anemia, less acne and less pelvic inflammatory disease among users.	Minor reactions include breast tenderness, nausea, vomiting, weight gain or loss, and spotting between periods. These often clear up after two or three months of use. Some medications may reduce its effectiveness.
Condom	A sheath of thin rubber or animal tissue that is put on a man's erect penis before intercourse. A condom collects a man's semen and keeps sperm from entering a woman's vagina.	Of 100 couples relying on condoms, about 10 pregnancies may occur during the first year of actual use. When the woman uses a vaginal contraceptive at the same time, there is greater protection.	Condoms are easy to get. They help protect against sexually transmitted diseases. They're a reliable and handy back-up or second method. They may help men with problems of premature ejaculation.	Rough handling may tear the condom. Care is needed in withdrawing. Some couples say it interrupts lovemaking, but the condom can be put on as part of foreplay. Some users claim feeling is dulled.
Diaphragm	A soft rubber cup that is used with contraceptive cream or jelly. When inserted into a woman's vagina before intercourse, the diaphragm covers the entrance to the uterus, and the cream or jelly stops sperm.	Of 100 women using diaphragms, about 19 may become pregnant during the first year of actual use. You may increase protection by checking that it covers the cervix every time you have intercourse.	Once it's learned, insertion is easy. It can be part of bedtime routine. Or it can be shared by both partners during lovemaking. Properly placed, it is generally not felt by either the woman or the man.	Most women have no side effects. Some women who use a diaphragm are more prone to develop bladder infections. Occasional mild allergic reactions to rubber or cream or jelly may occur.
Contraceptive Sponge	A soft, round-shaped sponge impregnated with a spermicide. The sponge is moistened and inserted into a woman's vagina where it releases spermicide that halts sperm activity and acts as a barrier.	Research studies claim that of 100 women using the sponge, 9 to 11 percent will become pregnant. Pregnancy rates will likely be higher in actual usage. Effectiveness can be increased by using a condom.	It comes in one size. Once learned, insertion is easy. There's little messiness or leakage. The spermicide contained in some sponges may offer protection against certain sexually transmitted diseases.	Rarely, irritation may occur with use of the sponge due to an allergic reaction. Removal problems can occur. There is some concern that sponge users may be at increased risk of toxic shock syndrome.
Chemical Contraceptives	Foams, creams, jellies and suppositories are chemical substances inserted deep into the vagina before intercourse that stop sperm but don't harm vaginal tissue.	Of 100 women using a vaginal contraceptive, about 18 may become pregnant during the first year of actual use. When the man uses a condom at the same time, greater protection is possible.	Easy to buy in drug stores and easy to use. May offer some protection against certain sexually transmitted diseases.	No known bodily side effects. In rare cases a man or woman may find these products produce a slight genital irritation. If not used exactly as directed, these products may not form a good barrier to the uterus.
Intrauterine Device	A small device of plastic that must be inserted into a woman's uterus by a clinician. Once inserted, an IUD changes the lining of the uterus so that it hinders pregnancy.	Of 100 women with IUDs, about 5 may become pregnant during the first year of actual use. Fewer pregnancies occur with continued use.	With an IUD in place, a woman does not need to think about using her birth control method every day or every time she has sex.	The following may occur: Cramping may be greater, bleeding may occur between periods, and periods may be heavier and last longer. The IUD may fall out, resulting in pregnancy.
Rhythm Methods	Several ways of checking a woman's changing bodily signs are designed to help her discover the days each month when an egg is likely to be released. She can therefore avoid unprotected intercourse during those days.	Among 100 women limiting intercourse by these methods, about 24 may become pregnant during the first year of actual use. Keeping careful records and consistent use can give better results.	No medication and little equipment is needed. Calendars, thermometers and charts are easy to get. These methods are acceptable to all religious groups.	No bodily side effects to the user. Care is needed in keeping records and interpreting signs. Illness or lack of sleep can produce false temperature signals. Vaginal infections may alter changes in vaginal mucus.

control like pills, and use condoms for protection against sexually transmitted diseases," she says. "We're seeing much more foam and condom use than we used to."

Miller says that because outside affairs are bound to occur in some relationships, she advises women to tell their partners to take precautions if they ever stray.

"I tell them to say, 'If you ever have sex with someone else, put a condom on it,'" she says.

Theoretically, using a combination of condoms and contraceptive foam results in a pregnancy prevention rate of 98 percent.

The actual rate is lower because people don't always use these methods correctly. Often they don't realize that latex can deteriorate when exposed to heat or petroleum products. This means condoms should not be lubricated with a petroleum-based jelly like Vaseline.

Some of the popularity of condoms can be attributed to the fact that they are the only method of birth control, short of sterilization, that men can be actively involved in.

A humor column by Dave Barry in the October issue of Glamour magazine suggested ways the sensitive man of the '80s could be involved in birth control. He suggests that partners take turns providing birth control. If the woman is on the pill, he says the man should act sympathetically and point out articles about the possible side effects of the pill.

This points out that some men want not only to be help as parents, but also to help with non-parenting.

Planned Parenthood doesn't provide sterilizations at the clinic. These are referred to doctors in the area.

IUDs are another birth control method Planned Parenthood doesn't provide. Miller says only one company makes these now because of liability insurance rates. Only 0.8 percent of the women who asked for birth control at the clinic last year chose IUDs.

An initial exam at the clinic costs \$36 for college students. Pills cost \$3 or \$4 per month, less than the \$10 to \$15 charged by pharmacies. Various foams, spermicides and condoms may also be purchased through the clinic.

The Brazos Valley Community Action Agency in downtown Bryan offers services similar to Planned Parenthood's, but at lower prices. Sally Thane, associate administrator of the agency, says a physical and lab work may cost up to \$7. The agency is federally funded, while Planned Parenthood gets only some state funding. This state funding has already run out for the fiscal year, Miller says.

Classes in natural family planning are offered by St. Joseph Hospital whenever there is enough demand, says Kathy Thomas, assistant director of nursing for obstetrics.

The classes teach the Billing's method of testing cervical mucus to determine when a woman can have sex without getting pregnant. Thomas says the method is theoretically 85 to 95 percent effective and is endorsed by the Catholic church.

Talking about contraception and diseases with your partner isn't always easy. But neither are the consequences if you don't.