



Contraceptive Methods

There are a number of contraceptive methods on the market today. From the condom and the diaphragm or cervical cap to Depo Provera and Emergency Contraception, each method is used in a different way and has its own set of positives and negatives. A woman must receive adequate information when considering a given method of contraception in order to make the decision that best for her. Below is a list of various contraceptive methods.

Barrier Methods

Female Condom — Made of polyurethane and looks similar to the male condom. But instead of fitting over (like the male condom fits over the penis), the female condom is a sheath that a woman inserts into her vagina. Closed end inserted into the vagina and the open end hangs outside of the vagina to cover the labia and lips of the vagina. Ring inside of condom helps with insertion and to hold it in place. No prescription required; can be bought at any drugstore. Can be used by people who are allergic to latex. Reduces risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), including HIV. One time usage.

Male Condom — Most are made of latex. (Latex condoms reduce risk of STI's, including HIV). However, some are made of animal products. (Condoms made from animal products do not protect against HIV). Is a sheath that is placed over an erect penis. Some have spermicide on them. No prescription needed and can get at the drug store. One time usage.

Cervical Cap — Is a soft, small rubber cap with a rim that fits around a woman's cervix. A woman has to be fitted for the cap. Thus, the cap can only be obtained with a prescription. It is used with a spermicide, which is squeezed into the cap. The cap is then inserted into the back of the vagina to cover the cervix. Can be left in place for up to 48 hours. Can have sex more than once during period cap is in place. Not effective against STI's, including HIV.

Diaphragm — Is a soft, rubber cup which is larger than the cervical cap (size will vary according to the woman) with a rim. The diaphragm is inserted into the back of the vagina to cover the cervix. Like the cap, a woman must be fitted for the diaphragm by a doctor or nurse and can only be obtained with a prescription. Used with spermicide. The diaphragm should be taken out after 6 hours. More spermicide should be inserted into the vagina each time a woman has sex within the 6 hour period. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

Spermicide — Kills sperm and helps to keep from getting pregnant. Comes in various forms (i.e, foam, cream, jelly, film, suppository, and tablets). Woman inserts the spermicide into her vagina before having sex. Should be left in the vagina for 6-8 hours after sex. More spermicide must be inserted each time a woman has sex. Must wait 10 or more minutes after insertion with some spermicides before having sex. Most effective when used with one of the above barrier methods. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

Dental Dam — A dental is a square piece of rubber that is held over the vaginal lips or labia or over the anus when performing oral sex. Can reduce risk of STI's, including HIV. (Can also use Saran Wrap as a form of protection during oral sex).

Hormonal Contraceptives

The Pill — Combination of estrogen and progestin (female hormones) taken daily. Works by preventing ovulation each month (release of egg from the ovary). Woman must be examined by a doctor before receiving. Need a prescription to obtain.

Emergency Contraception (EC) — Made up of female hormones. When taken within 120 hours of having unprotected sex, works to keep the egg from reaching the uterus. Taken as two doses of hormonal pills 12 hours apart. Need a prescription to obtain EC. There is currently one type of EC pill: Plan B® (only contains progestin). There is also the Copper-T IUD which must be inserted within 5 days of unprotected sex.

Seasonale® — Seasonale® is the FDA-approved extended-cycle birth control pill for the prevention of pregnancy that reduces your monthly periods to just 4 times a year. With this method, one pink pill is taken for 84 consecutive days followed by one white pill for seven days.

Ortho Evra® — Ortho Evra is a contraceptive patch that is applied once a week. It contains hormones similar to those in birth control pills. The patch applies directly to the skin in one of four areas and can be easily removed.

Provider-Controlled Hormonal Methods

Norplant® – Provider-controlled hormonal contraceptive that prevents pregnancy for 5 years. Inserted as six matchstick rods underneath the skin of a woman's upper arm. Must be inserted and removed by a trained physician. Rods release progestin slowly, over a period of time, preventing pregnancy by inhibiting ovulation and causing the cervical mucus to thicken to prevent the sperm from joining the egg. Has numerous side effects, including headaches, depression, nervousness, weight gain, severe acne, hair loss to name a few. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV. *In 2000, manufacturer, Wyeth-Ayerst suspended all shipments. Notified all providers that women who had received insertions from lots distributed on or after October 20, 1999 should be advised to use back-up, barrier, or other non-hormonal methods of contraception because the effectiveness of the lots could not be assured. (This contraceptive has been removed from the market).*

Implanon® – Provider-controlled hormonal contraceptive that is implanted in the form of a single rod underneath the skin of a woman's upper arm. Inhibits ovulation for at least 2 years. Causes some of the same side effects as Norplant®. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV. Implanon® has a marketing license in the European Union and is marketed in 8 European countries. Is available in Indonesia, as well. The manufacturer, Organon plan to introduce the contraceptive in Australia and Brazil. In 2000, Organon applied for USFDA approval to market Implanon® in the USA.

Depo Provera® – Provider-controlled hormonal contraceptive that is administered by giving a woman a shot of progestin in the arm or buttocks every 3 months. Works to prevent release of the egg and causes the cervical mucus to thicken to prevent the sperm from joining the egg. Causes some of the same side effects as Norplant® and Implanon®. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

Lunelle™ – Provider-controlled hormonal contraceptive that is administered by giving a woman a shot of estrogen in the arm, buttocks, or thigh every month. Works to prevent release of the egg and causes the cervical mucus to thicken to prevent the sperm from joining the egg. Causes some of the same side effects as Depo Provera®, Norplant®, and Implanon®. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

Intrauterine Devices

IUD – Inserted into a woman's uterus by a doctor. Works by preventing the sperm and the egg from meeting. Some IUDs must be replaced every year. Side effects include more bleeding, cramping, potential perforation of the uterus. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

Tubal Ligation

Surgical method for women whereby a doctor performs an operation to block a woman's fallopian tubes, preventing the sperm and egg from joining. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

Vasectomy

Surgical method for men whereby a doctor performs an operation to block a man's tubes that carry the sperm. Does not reduce risk of STI's, including HIV.

