

Natural method: Abstinence

How does it work

A natural method of contraceptions is abstinence—not having sex (or refraining from some aspects of sexual activity). Obviously if no sex is had, sperm has no way of reaching the woman's uterus for fertilisation to occur, making abstinence the most effective contraceptive method.

Risks and Limitations

Abstinence poses no direct health risks although an obvious limitation is having to go long periods of time without sex, this is unlikely and impractical among today's youth.

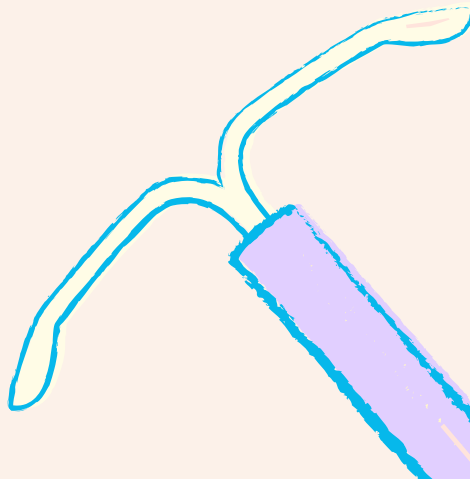
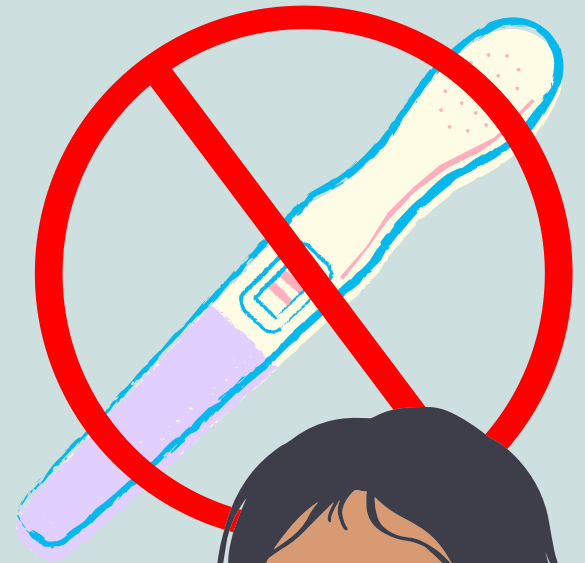
Benefits

- There are no side effects or adverse health risks
- 100% effective form of contraception
- Acceptable among most religions
- Full abstinence protects you completely from STIs

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PRACTICE SAFE SEX

Contraceptive Methods



Intrauterine Devices: Hormonal IUD

How does it work?

Intrauterine devices are made of plastic and inserted into the uterus. Hormonal IUDs release hormones that make the lining of the uterus unsuitable for a fertilised egg. The hormone also makes the cervix produce thick mucus that makes it difficult for sperm to enter the uterus for fertilisation to occur. The hormones may even stop ovulation altogether for some women.

Risks and Limitations

- Inserting an IUD raises the risk of uterine and pelvic infections as it may allow bacteria to enter the uterus, though this risk is relatively low and does not follow long term use. Other milder risks include headaches, tender breasts, mood swings, outbreaks, and cramping.
- Limitations of IUDs include irregular and sometimes heavier and/or more painful periods for the first few months after insertion, and IUDs do not protect against STIs. Another limitation is that a small operation and doctor's appointment must be booked to in order to get it inserted.

Benefits

- IUDs are 99% effective and very reliable
- They are long lasting, the hormonal IUD, Mirena, lasts for up to 5 years
- No serious health risks
- Easily removed and almost immediate fertility return
- Medication does not effect its effectiveness
- Price for long term use compared to other methods is more economic
- Does not effect sexual spontaneity

Mechanical Barriers: Condoms and Diaphragms

How do they work?

Condoms and diaphragms are a form of mechanical barrier, this means they physically stop the sperm from reaching the uterus for fertilisation to occur, normally by obstructing the path of the sperm. Male condoms are slipped onto the erect penis, diaphragms and female condoms are inserted into the vagina to block sperm from entering the uterus, the diaphragm specifically covers the cervix.

Risks and Limitations

- Risks can range from mild genital irritation to allergic reactions from the material, as well as adverse reactions to the spermicides which are often used to increase the effectiveness of mechanical barriers, but these are mild and few in-between. For condoms there is a risk of the material tearing allowing sperm to potentially fertilise an egg resulting in pregnancy.
- Limitations for all mechanical barriers are improper use, this being more common among the younger or more inexperienced individuals, such as teens.
- Diaphragms must be prescribed

Benefits

- Helps prevent STIs
- No long term or serious side effects
- 98% effective given it doesn't tear or in the case of a diaphragm get moved or inserted wrong

Hormonal Method: Mini Pill and DMPA Injection

How do they work?

The mini pill contains progestogen (progesterone substitute) that makes the cervical mucus thicker so that the sperm cannot enter the uterus. It also changes the lining of the uterus, making it difficult for a fertilised egg to implant. The DMPA injection marketed as Depo-Provera and Depo-Ralovera, is injected into the muscle of the arm or buttocks and contains the hormone progestin which does the same things as progestogen in the mini pill.

Risks and Limitations

- Risks of both methods include weight gain, headaches, sore breasts, mood changes, decreased sexual desire, acne and nausea.
- Limitations of the mini pill include having to take the pill at the same time each day, this is expensive, inconvenient and easy to mess up. For the injection there is the added limitation of having to use a needle which may be unfavourable to some and the delayed return of fertility. Both the injection and the pill do not protect against STIs

Benefits

The Pill

- When taken correctly 99% effective and reliable
- Regular periods

The Injection

- Lasts for 12 weeks
- When taken correctly 99% effective
- Periods can cease