

Contraceptive FAQ with Dr. Megan Bird

What method works the best?

The best birth control is the one you are happy with. If you hate it, you won't use it and it won't be effective. The most effective birth controls are sterilization, the IUDs (Mirena and Paragard) and the implant (Implanon). Of 100 women taking them for a year, less than 1 woman will get pregnant on these methods. But again, your best bet is to use something you are comfortable with.

Are there options if I can't take hormones?

Absolutely. There are barrier methods (condoms, cervical caps, diaphragms) that work by preventing sperm from getting into the uterus. You place these before sex and remove afterwards. There is also an IUD (intrauterine device) that the doctor can place in the uterus. The copper in the device interferes with sperm and prevents pregnancy.

Isn't birth control dangerous?

Everything we do has risks and benefits. Birth control is no exception. But you can make a good decision for you by comparing the risks of getting pregnant with the risks of birth control and deciding what is best for you.

Will I gain weight on birth control?

Maybe. Hormonal birth control affects each woman differently. Some are more likely to cause weight gain. Still most women don't gain weight due to birth control. Methods that are more likely to cause weight gain: Depo Provera, Implanon. Methods that are medium risk: birth control pills, patch or ring, Mirena IUD. Methods that are low or no risk: condoms, Paragard IUD, diaphragm, cervical cap.

What medications interfere with birth control?

Typically, we think of antibiotics making birth control less effective. Some do, notably Amoxicillin, Ampicillin and Tetracycline. Another medication women often take is Nystatin for yeast infections. Seizure medications may interfere as well. Unfortunately, some anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medications can interfere with birth control (Prozac, Celexa, Zoloft). Some supplements (St. John's Wort and Soy) also make birth control less effective.

How effective are pills?

Very effective... if you take them correctly. Out of 100 women who take the pill for a year, 2-9 of them get pregnant. Why the range? Some women are great pill takers and never miss a day. Some of us are not so great and miss pills. The more regularly you take them, the better they work.

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