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Birth Control

Also called: Contraception

What is birth control?

Birth control, also known as contraception, is the use of medicines, devices, or surgery to prevent pregnancy. There are many different types. Some are reversible, while others are permanent. Some types can also help prevent sexually transmitted infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/sexuallytransmittedinfections.html>] (STIs).

What are the different types of birth control?

There are several different types of birth control, and they work in different ways:

Barrier methods

Male condom	A thin sheath that covers the penis to collect sperm and prevent it from entering the woman's body. Condoms that are made of latex and polyurethane can help prevent STIs.
Female condom	A thin, flexible plastic pouch. Part of the condom is inserted into the vagina before intercourse to prevent sperm from entering the uterus. The uterus, or womb, is the place where the baby grows during pregnancy. Female condoms can also help prevent STIs.
Contraceptive sponge	A small sponge that you put into the vagina to cover the cervix (the opening of the uterus). The sponge also contains a spermicide to kill sperm.
Spermicide	A substance that can kill sperm cells. It comes in a foam, jelly, cream, suppository, or film. You put it into the vagina near the uterus. Spermicide can be used alone or with a diaphragm or cervical cap.
Diaphragm and cervical cap	Cups that are placed inside the vagina to cover the cervix. They may be used with spermicide. They come in different sizes, so it's important to see your health care provider to figure out which size works best for you.

Hormonal methods

Oral contraceptives ("the pill")	Pills that a woman takes every day. They may contain only progesterin or both progesterin and estrogen.
Contraceptive patch	A patch that a woman puts on her skin each week. The patch releases hormones into the bloodstream.
Vaginal ring	A thin, flexible ring. The woman inserts the ring into the vagina, where it continually releases hormones for three

Barrier methods

Injectable birth control

weeks. She takes it out for the fourth week. After that week, she puts in a new ring.

Implant

An injection of a hormone that a woman gets once every three months. This is done in your provider's office.

A single, thin rod that a provider inserts under the skin of a woman's upper arm. It is done in your provider's office. The implant can last for four years.

Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs)

Intrauterine device (IUD)

A small, T-shaped device that a provider inserts into the uterus. This is done in the provider's office. IUDs can last from 3 to 10 years. There are two types: hormonal IUDs and copper IUDs.

Sterilization

Tubal ligation

[<https://medlineplus.gov/tuballigation.html>]

A surgery that prevents a woman from getting pregnant. It is permanent.

Vasectomy

[<https://medlineplus.gov/vasectomy.html>]

A surgery that prevents a man from getting someone pregnant. It is permanent.

What are some other forms of pregnancy prevention?

There are some types of pregnancy prevention that do not involve medicines, devices, or surgery:

Other forms of pregnancy prevention

Fertility awareness-based methods

They are also called natural rhythm methods. They involve tracking the woman's fertility cycle and avoiding sex or using barrier methods on the days when she is most likely to get pregnant. This method may have higher pregnancy rates than other types.

Lactational amenorrhea method (LAM)

A form of natural birth control for breastfeeding mothers. It relies on the new mother feeding her baby only breastmilk for up to six months and having no periods or spotting during that time.

Withdrawal

During intercourse, the penis is pulled out of the vagina before ejaculation. The goal is to keep sperm from entering the vagina. But the sperm can leak out before the penis is pulled out, so this method has higher pregnancy rates than other types.

What is emergency contraception?

Emergency contraception is not a regular method of birth control. But it can be used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected intercourse or if a condom breaks. There are two types:

- Copper IUD, which is a small, T-shaped device that a provider inserts into the within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse.
- Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs), which are hormonal pills which the woman takes as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse.

What else should I know about birth control?

When deciding which birth control type is right for you, there are many different factors to consider:

- Do you want to have children someday? How soon?
- Do you have any health conditions?

- How often do you have sex?
- How many sex partners do you have?
- Do you also need protection from HIV and other STIs?
- How well does the birth control method work?
- Are there any side effects?
- Will you be able to use it correctly every time?
- How much does it cost?

Your provider can answer your questions about birth control to help you select the best type for you.

NIH: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Start Here

- Birth Control [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/womens-health-topics/birth-control>] (Food and Drug Administration)
- Birth Control Methods [<https://womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/birth-control-methods>]
(Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/birth-control-methods>]
- Birth Control Options: Things to Consider [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/combo-birth-control-pills/in-depth/birth-control-options/art-20045571?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/combo-birth-control-pills/in-depth/birth-control-options/art-20045571?p=1>]
- Contraception [<https://www.cdc.gov/contraception/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Contraception and Birth Control [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/contraception/conditioninfo>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/contracepcion/informacion>]
- Effectiveness of Birth Control Methods [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/infographics/effectiveness-of-birth-control-methods>] *Infographic* (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/infographics/eficacia-de-los-metodos-anticonceptivos>]
- What Are the Different Types of Contraception? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/contraception/conditioninfo/types>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/contracepcion/informacion/tipos>]

Related Issues

- Douching [<https://womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/douching>] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/douching>]
- Noncontraceptive Benefits of Birth Control Pills [<https://www.reproductivefacts.org/news-and-publications/fact-sheets-and-infographics/noncontraceptive-benefits-of-birth-control-pills/>] (American Society for Reproductive Medicine)
- Oral Contraceptives and Cancer Risk [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/hormones/oral-contraceptives-fact-sheet>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer/causas-prevencion/riesgo/hormonas/hoja-informativa-pildoras-anticonceptivas>]
- Other Contraception and Birth Control FAQs [https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/contraception/more_information/other-faqs]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/contracepcion/masinformacion/preguntas>]

Specifics

- Are Condoms 100% Effective? (For Teens) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/effective-condoms.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/effective-condoms.html>]
- Barrier Methods of Birth Control: Spermicide, Condom, Sponge, Diaphragm, and Cervical Cap [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/barrier-methods-of-birth-control-spermicide-condom-sponge-diaphragm-and-cervical-cap>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)

- **Birth Control: How to Use Your Diaphragm** [<https://familydoctor.org/birth-control-how-to-use-your-diaphragm/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/como-usar-su-diafragma/?adfree=true?adfree=true>]
- **Birth Control: Implantable Contraception** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/about-implantable-bc.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/about-implantable-bc.html>]
- **Combined Hormonal Birth Control: Pill, Patch, and Ring** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/combined-hormonal-birth-control-pill-patch-ring>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Depo-Provera: An Injectable Contraceptive** [<https://familydoctor.org/depo-provera-an-injectable-contraceptive/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/depo-provera-un-anticonceptivo-inyectable/?adfree=true>]
- **Emergency Contraception** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/emergency-contraception>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Essure Permanent Birth Control** [<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/implants-and-prosthetics/essure-permanent-birth-control>] (Food and Drug Administration)
- **Fertility Awareness-Based Methods of Family Planning** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/fertility-awareness-based-methods-of-family-planning>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **How to Use a Dental Dam** [<https://www.cdc.gov/condom-use/resources/dental-dam.html>] *Easy-to-Read Infographic* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/condom-use/es/resources/como-usar-una-barrera-bucal-1.html>]
- **Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC): Intrauterine Device (IUD) and Implant** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/long-acting-reversible-contraception-iud-and-implant>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Morning-After Pill** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/morning-after-pill/about/pac-20394730?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/morning-after-pill/about/pac-20394730?p=1>]
- **Postpartum Birth Control** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/postpartum-birth-control>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Progestin-Only Hormonal Birth Control: Pill and Injection** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/progestin-only-hormonal-birth-control-pill-and-injection>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Sterilization for Women and Men** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/sterilization-for-women-and-men>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Withdrawal Method (Coitus Interruptus)** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/withdrawal-method/about/pac-20395283?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/withdrawal-method/about/pac-20395283?p=1>]

Images

- **Barrier methods of birth control - series** [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100107_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100107_1.htm]
- **Birth control pill - series -- Normal female anatomy** [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100108_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100108_1.htm]
- **Condom application - series -- Procedure, part 1** [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100109_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100109_1.htm]



Test Your Knowledge

- **Test Your Knowledge About Birth Control** [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/quiz/001946_51.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/quiz/001946_109.htm]

Statistics and Research

- **FastStats: Contraceptive Use** [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/contraceptive.htm>] (National Center for Health Statistics)
- **Key Statistics from the National Survey of Family Growth: Vasectomy** [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key_statistics/v.htm] (National Center for Health Statistics)

Clinical Trials


- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Contraception** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=contraception&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Family Planning Services** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Family+Planning+Services%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Intrauterine Devices** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Intrauterine+Devices%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- **Article: Family planning and pregnancy among patients with psoriasis: incorporating the patients'...** [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40739803>]
- **Article: "I was told it was the pill that suits me": A...** [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40726097>]
- **Article: Reproductive outcomes of patients with unfulfilled postpartum permanent contraception requests.** [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40726083>]
- **Birth Control -- see more articles** [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Contraception%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Family+Planning+Services%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+2+Years%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- **Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health** [<https://womenshealth.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/>]
- **Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/>]
- **How to Find Find an Ob-Gyn** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn>]
(American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)


Teenagers

- **Abstinence** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/abstinence.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/abstinence.html>]
- **Birth Control Patch** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-patch.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-patch.html>]
- **Birth Control Pill** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-birth.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-birth.html>]
- **Birth Control Ring** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-ring.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-ring.html>]
- **Birth Control Shot** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-depo.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-depo.html>]
- **Birth Control: The Pill** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/bcpills.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/bcpills.html>]

- **Condoms** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-condom.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-condom.html>]
- **Could I Get Pregnant if I Have Sex During My Period?** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sex-during-period.html>]
(Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/sex-during-period.html>]
- **Diaphragm** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-diaphragm.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-diaphragm.html>]
- **Do You Need a Pelvic Exam to Get Birth Control?** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/pelvic-exam-bc.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/pelvic-exam-bc.html>]
- **Emergency Contraception** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-emergency.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- **How Can I Get Birth Control without Telling My Parents?** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/talktoparents.html>]
(Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/talktoparents.html>]
- **IUD (Intrauterine Device)** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-iud.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-iud.html>]
- **Withdrawal** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-withdrawal.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/contraception-withdrawal.html>]

Men

- **How Effective Is Male Contraception?** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/menshealth/conditioninfo/effective>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/menshealth/informacion/anticoncepcion>]

Patient Handouts

- **Birth control - slow release methods** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007555.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007555.htm>]
- **Birth control and family planning** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001946.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001946.htm>]
- **Birth control pills** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007460.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007460.htm>]
- **Birth control pills - combination** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000655.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000655.htm>]
- **Birth control pills - progestin only** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000656.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000656.htm>]
- **Condoms - male** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004001.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/004001.htm>]
- **Deciding about an IUD** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000774.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000774.htm>]
- **Female condoms** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004002.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/004002.htm>]
- **Intrauterine devices (IUD)** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007635.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007635.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Barrier methods of birth control - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100107_1.htm]

Birth control - slow release methods [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007555.htm>]

Birth control and family planning [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001946.htm>]

Birth control pill - series -- Normal female anatomy [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100108_1.htm]

Birth control pills [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007460.htm>]

Birth control pills - combination [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000655.htm>]

Birth control pills - progestin only [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000656.htm>]

Birth control pills overdose [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002599.htm>]

Condom application - series -- Procedure, part 1 [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100109_1.htm]

Condoms - male [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004001.htm>]

Deciding about an IUD [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000774.htm>]

Emergency contraception [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007014.htm>]

Female condoms [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004002.htm>]

Intrauterine devices (IUD) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007635.htm>]

Vaginal sponge and spermicides [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004003.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Teen Sexual Health [<https://medlineplus.gov/teensexualhealth.html>]

Tubal Ligation [<https://medlineplus.gov/tuballigation.html>]

Vasectomy [<https://medlineplus.gov/vasectomy.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Birth Control* is the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/birthcontrol.html>] on *Birth Control*

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