

# Birth Control Basics

## *A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

*Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.*

### NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

**PR.8.CC.3** - Explain the health benefits, risks and effectiveness rates of various methods of contraception, including abstinence and condoms.

**PR.8.CC.4** - Define emergency contraception and its use.

**PR.8.AI.2** - Identify medically-accurate information about emergency contraception.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 8  
Lesson 8

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Index cards – one per student
- One set of the seven method cards for students' use
- One set of the seven method cards with two additional copies of the "Dual Use" card for use by teacher
- One set of the three category cards
- Newsprint – one piece, posted at the front of the room
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Optional – a birth control kit with the above methods to show students (Note: Many Planned Parenthoods sell birth control kits as does Total Access Group here [http://www.totalaccessgroup.com/contraceptive\\_demonstration\\_educator\\_kit.htm](http://www.totalaccessgroup.com/contraceptive_demonstration_educator_kit.htm))
- Homework – Birth Control Basics – one per student
- Teacher Resource Only (not to be distributed to students): [How to Answer Student Questions on Over the Counter Birth Control](#)

### ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Have the following Ask AMAZE video, "Can I Buy Birth Control Pills Without a Prescription?" cued and ready to play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuO4TwXQS-g>
- Print one set of the three category cards with one each of the following per page:
  - Protects for a Few Years (Long-Acting Methods)
  - Protects for a Month (Short-Acting Methods)
  - Protects right now
- Seven method cards copied double-sided so that the method is on one side and the three statements are on the other side – two sets needed as noted in the materials section
  - abstinence
  - external condoms
  - pills/patch/ring
  - IUDs/shot/implant
  - withdrawal
  - emergency contraception
  - dual protection

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe the impact of correct and consistent use of a birth control method on how effective it is at preventing pregnancy. [Knowledge]
2. Correctly recall that there is generally a gap between when a person may start to have vaginal sex and when they may wish to get pregnant, which makes using effective birth control important. [Knowledge]
3. State correctly what emergency contraception is. [Knowledge]

### A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

**PROCEDURE:**

**STEP 1:** Introduce the topic by explaining that birth control, sometimes called contraception, is a way to prevent a pregnancy if a different sex couple has vaginal sex. There are many different kinds of birth control that work by preventing the sperm and egg from joining in a variety of ways, if they are used consistently and correctly. This means the method is used every time the way it was intended. (2 minutes)

**STEP 2:** On the left end of the board draw a horizontal line running all the way to the other end of the board.

***Note to the Teacher:** You're creating a timeline. On the left end write the typical age of your 8th graders, likely 13 or 14.*

Explain to students that this lesson will look a bit at their future through the end of middle school, over the summer and into high school.

Ask students to raise their hands if they think they may want to have children or become parents someday. Acknowledge that some might and some might not and either is fine. Ask students what someone would need to do in order to be ready to have a child. As students brainstorm responses, write them on the newsprint posted near the timeline you have created. Students will likely suggest things like have money, have a job, have a place to live, etc. Ask students, "Based on all the things on this list, what is the best age to have children, knowing that people's personal experiences can vary a lot?" (As students call out answers, write them under the timeline with a tick mark indicating where they fall. Students might give answers ranging from late teen years to early adulthood.) Summarize by saying, "Okay, now that we know what someone who wants children has to do to get ready by ages (insert ages they gave you), let's look at what they can do to reach those goals." (5 minutes)

**STEP 3:** Draw a stick figure above the timeline all the way to the left side. Introduce the stick figure you have drawn by stating they are currently an 8th grader like you. Say, "The stick figure wants to have children someday, but not any time soon. They are trying to decide if they should have vaginal sex or not. Let's imagine that they wait until they are older—maybe 16 before they have vaginal sex."

***Note to the Teacher:** Write the age of 16 on the timeline above where the stick figure is.*

Say, "And this person also agrees with what we've brainstormed about what they need to do in order to be the best parent they can be. So maybe they want to wait until they are out of high school before they have children. Generally someone is done with high school at age 18."

***Note to the Teacher:** Write the age 18 on the timeline a few inches down from where you wrote age 16.*

Say, "So once this 8th grader is done with high school, have they done everything on this list we created?"

***Note to the Teacher:** Generally the answer is "no" but allow students to respond authentically here since some may be children of young parents.*

So, let's say this person wants to wait a few more years after high school to have children, maybe until they're 21 years-old."

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**Note to the Teacher:** Write the age 21 on the timeline a few inches down from age 18.

Say, “Now let’s do some simple math. If this stick figure decides to have vaginal sex while they are age 16 but doesn’t want to have children until age 21, how many years do they need to protect themselves from starting a pregnancy?”

**Note to the Teacher:** The answer should be 5 years.

Say, “We know the most effective way for this stick figure to absolutely make sure that they don’t start a pregnancy is by delaying having vaginal sex, until they are older. So let’s imagine that our stick figure is able to do that. Maybe they show their affection for people they are dating in other ways, but they do not have vaginal sex until age 17.

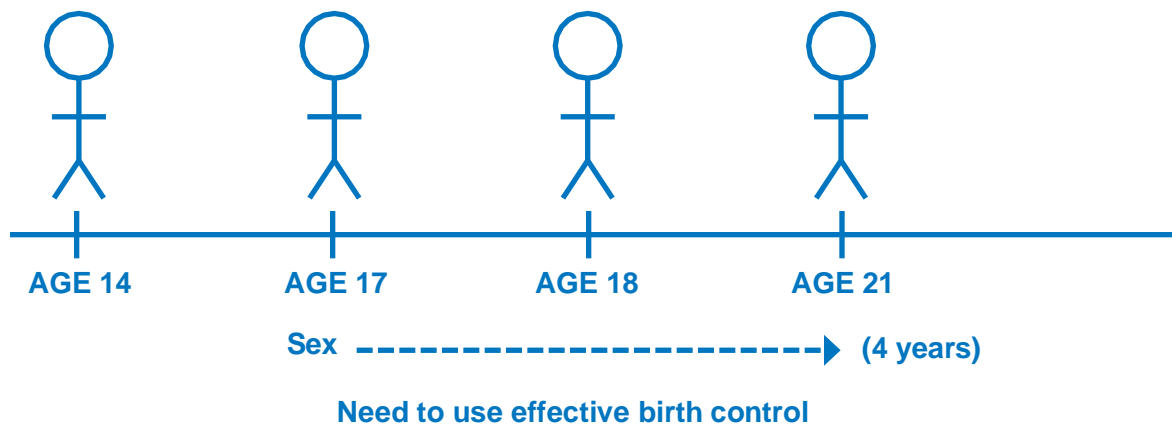
**Note to the Teacher:** Write the word “sex” under the age 17 on your timeline.

Now, between age 17, when they decide to have vaginal sex, until age 21, when they think they want to start having children, how many years is in between there?”

**Note to the Teacher:** The answer is 4 years so draw an arrow under the timeline from age 17 to 21 and the words ‘need to use effective birth control’.

Say “So we have narrowed the gap a bit by waiting from 5 to 4 years But, four years is still a really long time! So this stick figure, if they decide to have vaginal sex will need to use effective birth control during that time period to make sure they don’t start a pregnancy until they want to. And keep in mind that we’re only talking about pregnancy today, but they will also need to protect themselves from STDs too.”

**Note to the Teacher:** At the end, this is what your timeline should look like. (5 minutes)



**STEP 4:** Explain by saying, “There are many methods of birth control available to people who want to wait to have children until later in life or who may never want to have children.” Introduce the three categories and tape each category to the board to form three columns as you talk. Say, “All of these methods work a little differently but some protect right now, some protect for a short time, like one month, and some protect for a long-time, sometimes even a few years.” Review the following 7 methods of birth control one at a time by showing the card with name of the method on it, stating the information about the method below and then tape the method card in the correct column you have already created.

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“Abstaining from vaginal sex is the only 100% effective way to prevent pregnancy when done consistently and correctly. In fact, it is the method used by most 8th graders. Ask students what you mean by “when done consistently and correctly.” Affirm or correct their statements until you feel satisfied that they understand that abstinence only works when people use it every time. This means a penis not going inside another person’s vagina. Tell them that most people are not abstinent forever but choosing to delay having sex until you are a bit older can be a very healthy choice.” [Place in the “protects right now” category.]

“External condoms (sometimes called male condoms) are worn on a penis. Anyone can buy them at the store (including 8th graders) and they are very effective at preventing pregnancy when used consistently (meaning every time a couple has vaginal sex) and correctly. They also have the added bonus of protecting against most sexually transmitted diseases or STDs.” [Place in the “protects right now” category.]

***Note to the Teacher:** You will notice that we use the phrases “external” condom. Explain that, while students may be familiar with the terms “male” condom, you are using these terms to reflect how the methods are used, rather than to assign a gender to them.*

“The birth control pill, the patch and the ring all contain hormones that are very effective at preventing pregnancy. The patch and the ring work for a month at a time and then have to be replaced. The patch you replace once a week and the ring you replace once a month. The pill needs to be taken once a day, at the same time every day. A pack of pills lasts one month and then you need to start the next pack. These are called short-acting methods that you can get from a clinic.”

Say, “Recently, one brand of birth control pills, called Opill, has become available for purchase at any drugstore, which is a place like Walgreens, CVS, or Target or online. This means that a person does not need a prescription, they can just walk into a store to buy them for around \$20 per pack.” [Place in the “short-acting- protects for a month” category.]

Show students the Ask AMAZE video, “Can I Buy Birth Control Pills Without A Prescription?”

“Most IUDs, the shot and the implant contain hormones that are very effective at preventing pregnancy for anywhere between a few months (3 months for the shot) and many years (up to 10 for some IUDs). These are called long-acting methods that you can get from a clinic too.” [Place in the “long-acting- protects for a few years” category.]

“Withdrawal, often called pulling out, is when a penis is removed from a vagina before sperm are ejaculated to prevent pregnancy and while it is not as effective as some other methods, it is definitely better than not using anything. It is not, however, the same thing as abstinence.” [Place in the “protects right now” category.]

“Emergency contraception, often called Plan B, is medicine that is taken after unprotected vaginal sex to prevent pregnancy and the sooner it is taken after vaginal sex, the more effective it is.” [Place in the “protects right now” category.]

“Dual use is when people who have vaginal sex want to get the most effective protection possible by using a condom in addition to another method (a condom and the pill, a condom

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and the IUD). This doubles their protection and helps protect them against both unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. But this does not apply to using two condoms at the same time, which should not be done, as that can cause the latex to break.” [Place a dual protection sign in all three categories to show that a wide variety of methods can be used together.] (15 minutes)

**Note to the Teacher:** At the end, your board should look like this.

Protects Right Now	Protects for a Month (Short-Acting Methods)	Protects for a Few Years (Long-Acting Methods)
Abstinence	Pills/Patch/Ring	IUDs/Shot/Implant
External Condoms	Dual Use	Dual Use
Withdrawal		
Emergency Contraception		
Dual Use		

**STEP 5:** Explain that the next activity will help students learn a bit more about the benefits of the various methods and how well they work when they are used correctly and consistently. Explain that the class will be playing a game called “Which One is Not True.” Select seven student volunteers and have them come to the front of the room.

**Note to the Teacher:** Select students who you think would not be too embarrassed to participate and can handle the activity maturely.

Give each of the seven volunteers one of the seven method cards and have them review the three statements on the back of the card to prepare to read them aloud to the class.

While volunteers are preparing, explain to the rest of the class that each of the seven students will be representing one of the methods of birth control that are on the board. The students will be sharing three statements about the method but only two will be true and one will be a lie. The class needs to decide which statement is the lie and be able to explain why it’s a lie.

Once the seven students are ready, have them reveal which birth control method they

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are and read aloud the three statements. Ask the class to guess which statement is the lie and explain why it's a lie adding in accurate information as needed and correcting any misinformation that might come up. Continue playing until all seven methods have been shared. Once done, thank the volunteers and have students return to their seats.

**Note to the Teacher:** *You can turn this activity into a competitive game with teams and points if you think your students will respond well and you have the time and set-up that would allow this.* (20 minutes)

**STEP 6:** Close by returning to the stick figure. Say, "Now knowing more about birth control, what methods do you think would be effective for this person if they were to have vaginal sex right now? What about when they are in high school?" Take some ideas and make sure to reinforce that delaying vaginal sex is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy, and if anyone chooses to have vaginal sex and they are not ready for a possible pregnancy, that using two methods together (dual protection) can be very effective. Assign homework and close the lesson. (3 minutes)

## RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The Two Truths and a Lie activity will accomplish the first and third learning objective while the stick figure timeline discussion will accomplish the second learning objective.

## HOMEWORK:

Distribute the worksheet, "Birth Control Basics" and have students return it during your next class session. Explain that it will involve them watching a short animated video and answering corresponding questions.

## Homework: Birth Control Basics

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Watch the video, Birth Control Animation | The Contraceptinator available here, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypbxZQ8wEFY>, and answer the following questions.

- 1) Why are Phoebe and Lee visited by the Contraceptinator and their future selves?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) List two pieces of advice that Lee and Phoebe are given and explain why they are given it.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Now that Lee and Phoebe know how to prevent a pregnancy and STDs, what is your advice to them?



# How to Answer Student Questions on Over-The-Counter Birth Control

OPIll IS APPEARING IN STORES AND STUDENTS ARE STARTING TO ASK ABOUT IT.

This resource IS NOT to be shared with students, it is designed to support teachers in answering student's questions on the topic of over-the-counter birth control. Teachers who cover sex education in schools have long been a source of sexual health information for students. If you have a Sex Ed unit coming up, we encourage you to check out the following:

→ [AMAZE Video on Opill](#)

→ [Videos on birth control myths, and Opill safety](#)

→ [Bedsider Opill FAQ](#)

→ [Amaze.org](#)

→ [3Rs Sex Education Curriculum](#)

- [Birth Control Basics - 8th Grade](#)

- [Know Your Options - 10th Grade](#)

But we know your students might ask you about the new birth control pills they're seeing in stores and online. Here's a handy list of suggested responses you can use:

## Do you have to go to a doctor before getting on birth control pills?

**ANSWER:** It's always a good idea to talk to a doctor or healthcare professional before starting hormonal birth control. But if that's not possible for you, there is a product you can buy at a drug store or online called Opill that is just as effective in preventing pregnancy. Be sure to read the directions and follow them exactly.

## How does it work?

**ANSWER:** The medication in Opill (Norgestrel) was first approved for use in the U.S. in 1973. Opill is the same formulation that has been studied and proven safe for over 50 years, just available over-the-counter. Taking Opill once a day at the same time everyday will thicken cervical mucus to block sperm from reaching an egg. It takes 48 hours after your first dose for Opill to start being effective, but when taken as directed, Opill is 98% effective at preventing pregnancy. But remember, birth control pills do NOT protect against STIs, so it's important to use both birth control pills and condoms.

## Do you have to take Opill at the exact same time every day?

**ANSWER:** Yes, Opill should be taken at the same time every day for it to be most effective. If the exact time is missed, it is suggested to take the pill within a 3-hour window of your normal time. If you miss a pill or go past that 3-hour window, you should use a backup form of birth control such as condoms. With perfect use, Opill is 98% effective at preventing pregnancy.

## Is this the same as the morning-after pill (emergency contraception)?

**ANSWER:** No! Not at all. Opill is a birth control pill you take every single day to *prevent* pregnancy. Emergency contraception is a single pill taken *after* unprotected sex, but before you are pregnant.



### Do you need to be 18 to buy Opill?



**ANSWER:** No. The FDA determined that Opill is so safe that it should be treated just like condoms, Advil or Emergency Contraception like Plan B. The store should not ask for your ID when buying it. But of course, it's often a good idea to talk to a parent or trusted adult before you decide to use birth control.

### If I'm under 18, do my parents need to buy it for me?



**ANSWER:** No. While it's often a good idea to talk to a parent or trusted adult before you decide to use birth control, Opill can be purchased online or at drug stores just like condoms or Emergency Contraception - no prescription, no I.D. check. Although if you'd like, someone else can buy it for you, such as a parent, grandparent, partner, or trusted friend.

### How much does it cost? What if I can't afford it?



**ANSWER:** Opill costs around \$20 for a one-month pack, \$50 for a 3-month supply, and \$80 for a 6-month supply. In some states, Medicaid or private insurance does cover the cost of over-the-counter birth control, but for the vast majority of people, Opill will not be covered. If that's too much money, there is also a cost assistance program available online at [OpillCAP.com](https://OpillCAP.com)

### What's in Opill?



**ANSWER:** Opill is a progestin-only pill, so it contains only one type of hormone, progestin, whereas many prescription birth control pills contain both estrogen and progestin. There are fewer conditions that would prevent someone from being able to take a progestin-only pill like Opill. People are often prescribed a progestin-only pill if they can't take estrogen for some reason.

### Can I use Opill for other problems like cramps, heavy periods or acne?



**ANSWER:** Opill is only approved to prevent pregnancy. If there are other issues you've heard birth control pills may help with, it's better to ask a healthcare professional first.

### Will Opill make me gain weight or affect whether I can have kids in the future?



**ANSWER:** No! These are myths! The research is clear: there is **no link** between taking birth control pills and weight gain, and birth control has zero (yes ZERO!) impact on your ability to have kids later in life, if you choose to.

### Is this now the only way to get birth control pills?



**ANSWER:** Absolutely not! People can still go to the doctor for a prescription just like always, and insurance will cover the cost. Opill is simply one more option in case visiting the doctor for a prescription is difficult, burdensome, or impossible.

# Abstinence

**Statement 1)** Abstinence, if used consistently and correctly, is 100% effective at preventing pregnancy.

**Statement 2)** Abstaining from vaginal, oral, and anal sex can also protect against STDs.

**Statement 3)** Abstinence never fails.  
(NOT TRUE – Abstinence can fail if, for example, a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol and doesn't stay abstinent.)

# External Condoms



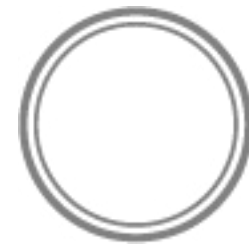
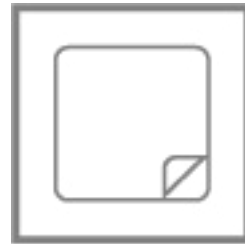
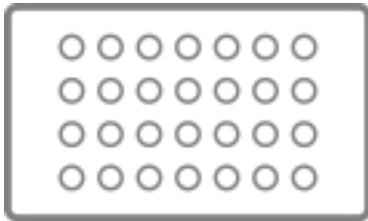
**Statement 1)** Condoms can help make sex last longer.

**Statement 2)** You must be 16 years old to purchase condoms.

(NOT TRUE – Condoms can be legally bought from any store at any age. While they may be placed behind a counter, anyone of any age is legally allowed to buy condoms in all 50 states.)

**Statement 3)** Condoms, if used consistently and correctly, are 98% effective at preventing pregnancy.

# Pills/Patch/Ring



**Statement 1)** The pill, patch and ring can help reduce menstrual cramps and make menstrual periods shorter.

**Statement 2)** The pill, patch and ring, if used consistently and correctly, are each 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.

**Statement 3)** The pill, patch and ring, if used consistently and correctly, are also really effective at preventing STDs.

(NOT TRUE – The pill, patch and ring ONLY provide protection from pregnancy but do not provide any protection against STDs. So using a condom along with one of these methods will help increase the protection against pregnancy and protect against STDs.)



# IUDs/Shot /Implant



**Statement 1)** You can get the IUD, shot and implant at pharmacies like Target, Walgreens or CVS.

**(NOT TRUE – The IUD, shot and implant require a person to go to a health care provider.)**

**Statement 2)** Many people who use the IUD, shot or implant experience much shorter and lighter menstrual periods.

**Statement 3)** The IUD, shot and implant, if used consistently and correctly, are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.

# Withdrawal

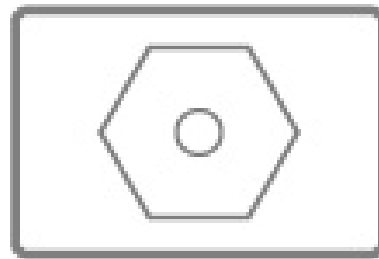
**Statement 1)** Withdrawal or pulling out, prevents most STDs.

**(NOT TRUE – Since withdrawal does not prevent skin-to-skin touching or fluid exchange, if one person is infected with an STD it can still be passed to their partner even if they used withdrawal perfectly.)**

**Statement 2)** Withdrawal is more effective at preventing pregnancy than doing nothing if someone has unprotected sex.

**Statement 3)** Pre-ejaculatory fluid (or “pre- cum”), which comes out of a penis when it is erect, may contain some sperm. Withdrawal cannot prevent this “pre-cum” from getting inside a vagina.

# Emergency Contraception



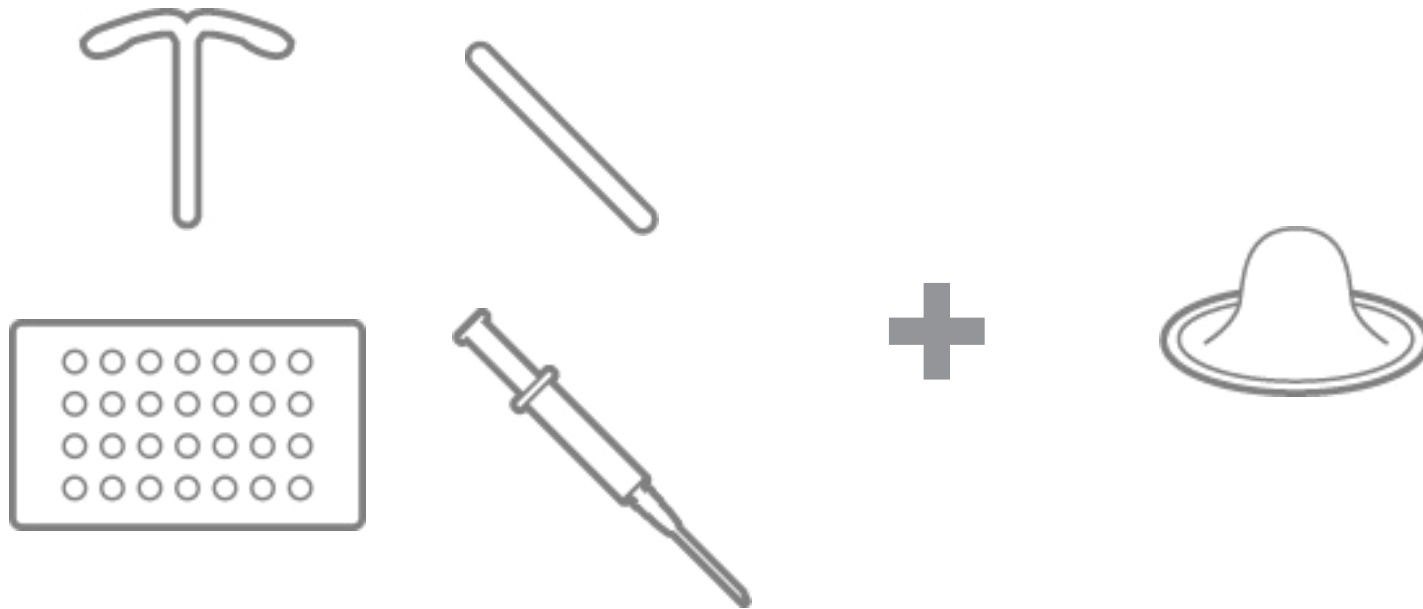
**Statement 1)** Anyone of any age and gender can buy emergency contraception from a drugstore like Target, CVS, Rite Aid or Walgreens.

**Statement 2)** The sooner after unprotected vaginal sex a person takes emergency contraception, the more effective it is. It must be taken within five days after unprotected sex.

**Statement 3)** Emergency contraception works by forming a barrier in the fallopian tube which prevents sperm from passing through.

**(NOT TRUE – Emergency contraception works mostly by telling the ovaries to not let any eggs out and sometimes by preventing the egg from being fertilized.)**

# Dual Use





**Statement 1)** Dual use generally means using a condom in addition to another method of birth control for STD and pregnancy prevention.

**Statement 2)** A person would need to get a doctor's permission before they used dual protection with their partner.

**(NOT TRUE – Dual use is something two people can decide on their own if they want to increase their protection.)**

**Statement 3)** A person of any age or gender is legally allowed to buy condoms at a drugstore like Target, CVS, Rite Aid or Walgreens.

**Protects for a Few  
Years**

**(Long-Acting Methods)**

**Protects  
for a Month  
(Short-Acting Methods)**

**Protects  
Right Now**