

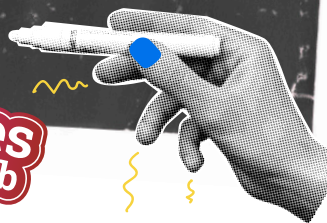
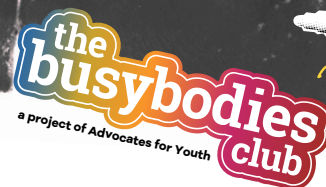
## MODULE 1: BIRTH CONTROL

# FAQS





# BIRTH CONTROL FAQS



## “WHAT IS BIRTH CONTROL?”

Contraception or birth control is used to prevent pregnancy **BEFORE** it happens. Common types of birth control include the pill, IUDs, implants, the patch, and barrier methods like condoms. Each method has its own benefits, so it's important to research which method would be best for you!

## WILL TAKING BIRTH CONTROL AFFECT MY ABILITY TO GET PREGNANT LATER?



Several large scale studies have demonstrated that taking birth control of any kind does not have any impact on your fertility when you're not using it.

**"Contraceptive use regardless of its duration and type does not have a negative effect on the ability of women to conceive following termination of use and it doesn't significantly delay fertility."**

This makes perfect sense when you think about how birth control works- by preventing or delaying ovulation (when your ovaries release an egg); preventing sperm from reaching an egg; or interfering with sperm function.

## IS BIRTH CONTROL A CARCINOGEN? DOES IT CAUSE CANCER?

Birth control can actually help prevent certain types of cancer, such as ovarian, endometrial, and colon cancers. Like a lot of medications, birth control may slightly increase risk of breast cancer. A large study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that for people under 35, there was only one additional breast cancer case for every 50,000 people who used hormonal contraceptives for a year.

**TLDR: It's very low additional risk, and it is reversible after 5-10 years after stopping birth control. And we know we're in a world of carcinogens - everything from processed meat to the sun itself increases the risk of cancer. But if you're concerned, you can choose a non-hormonal method like the IUD or condoms.**

Don't Forget the Goal of Birth Control:  
**PREVENTING UNINTENDED PREGNANCY.**

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## CAN I USE PLAN B AS A FORM OF BIRTH CONTROL?

Emergency contraception, or “the morning after pill,” is used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. Emergency contraception is made up of the medication Levonorgestrel, but you might know it by the brand names Plan B or Julie. Emergency contraception is not the same as daily birth control pills. While there is no limit to how often you can use EC, and it will not harm your health to take EC multiple times, it is not recommended to use EC as a main method of birth control. EC is not as effective as daily birth control pills and is typically much more expensive. Opill is a great option for a daily birth control pill, and it's available over-the-counter without a prescription (just like EC), and is up to 98% effective at preventing pregnancy.

## DOES PLAN B CAUSE AN ABORTION? IS PLAN B OR JULIE THE SAME THING AS THE ABORTION PILL?

Levonorgestrel emergency contraception (EC), also known by brand names such as Plan B, Julie, or “the morning after pill,” is used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. Levonorgestrel EC pills are not abortion pills, do not cause abortions, and will not terminate an existing pregnancy. Levonorgestrel EC will only work if you are not already pregnant, and will not harm an existing pregnancy. Levonorgestrel EC works by preventing ovulation and is most effective the sooner you take it after unprotected sex.

### BIRTH CONTROL

- Progestin+ Estrogen OR progestin-only
- Routinely taken to prevent pregnancy by preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovaries), thickening the mucus of the cervix to reduce the ability of sperm to enter the uterus, and/or thinning the lining of the uterus.
- Taken daily
- Available OTC (progestin-only) or via prescription

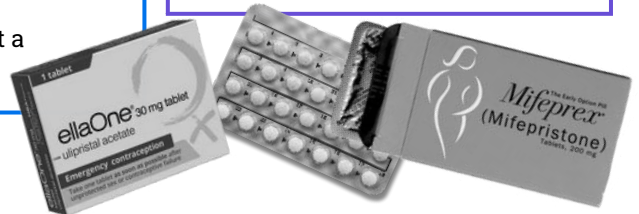


### EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

- Levonorgestrel (a type of progestin)
- Taken immediately after having unprotected sex and BEFORE pregnancy can occur
- Available OTC without a prescription

### MEDICATION ABORTION

- Mifepristone + Misoprostol
- Taken when a person is pregnant to terminate an existing pregnancy
- The most common form of abortion
- Can get it through a medical provider or outside the medical system via “self-managed abortion”



## WHAT BIRTH CONTROL IS MOST EFFECTIVE?

Hormonal methods, barrier methods, and IUDs are all highly effective if used regularly and correctly. Choosing a method is more about what works for your life, your plans, and your body.

If you're worried about convenience, an IUD or implant might be a great choice for you. They require a one time insertion and protection can last between 3-12 years.

If you want a method that you can start or stop at any time, birth control pills might work best for you. You can even grab the progestin-only pill Opill at your local drugstore without a prescription.

## DO I NEED MY PARENTS' PERMISSION TO GET ON BIRTH CONTROL?

If you are under 18, whether you can get a prescription for birth control from a healthcare provider depends on which state you live in.

Anyone, regardless of age and in any state, can purchase and use Opill without age verification or parental permission.

Condoms are also widely available in grocery stores, drugstores, and online.

[CHECK YOUR STATE HERE](#)

[FIND OUT WHERE TO BUY  
OPILL NEAR YOU.](#)

## DO BIRTH CONTROL PILLS MAKE YOU GAIN WEIGHT?

Some methods that contain progestin can cause mild and temporary water retention (which can cause bloating) or an increase in appetite. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists acknowledges: "Some individuals may experience normal weight fluctuation during the time in their life in which they use contraception, but evidence does not show a definitive link between hormonal birth control and weight gain." Studies have also found that the Depo-Provera shot is more associated with weight gain than other hormonal methods. If weight gain is a concern for you, condoms and IUDs are effective methods of birth control.

## DOES EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION HAVE A WEIGHT LIMIT?

TBH- there is not a ton of scientific evidence on this- despite rumors you might've heard. Some research suggests levonorgestrel EC pills may be less effective for people weighing over 165 lbs. If you are over 165 lbs you can still take over-the-counter EC like Plan B. It will not do any harm, but just be mindful that it might not be AS effective, and monitor your symptoms after taking it. For further peace of mind, check out ella, a prescription-only emergency contraception you'd need to get from a health care provider. ella uses a different medicine than Plan B and lowers the chances of getting pregnant by 85% if taken it within 5 days after unprotected sex, and it is effective for folks under 195 pounds.

"Can't I just take two pills if I am over 165 pounds?"

Sorry bestie, doubling up will not increase effectiveness and it is not recommended to take two doses of EC. Instead, look into ella, or a copper IUD if implanted within 5 days of unprotected sex.

TLDR

There is no weight limit; however, the effectiveness of EC decreases for folks over 165 pounds when using Plan B, Julie, or a levonorgestrel EC pill. When using the prescription EC called ella, folks over 195 pounds might also experience decreased effectiveness. Taking EC will not hurt if you are over these tested weights.

TLDR

## IF I'M USING HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL LIKE THE PILL, DO I STILL NEED TO USE CONDOMS?

Even if you're on the pill, using condoms is a great idea! Remember that birth control only protects you from pregnancy, not sexually transmitted infections (STIs. Condoms prevent both pregnancy and the transmission of STIs.) You should also talk to your partner or partners about getting tested for STIs and HIV regularly and know your status. You can also speak with a healthcare provider about PrEP to prevent HIV.

## WHAT ABOUT ABSTINENCE?

Choosing not to have sex, sometimes called abstinence, is a valid choice for anyone. It's free, easily available, and very effective at preventing pregnancy. But like all methods, if you stop using it, it stops working. Even if you are choosing not to have sex right now, having a plan to use another method is a good idea - so consider having Opill and condoms on hand.

## DOES WITHDRAWAL WORK?

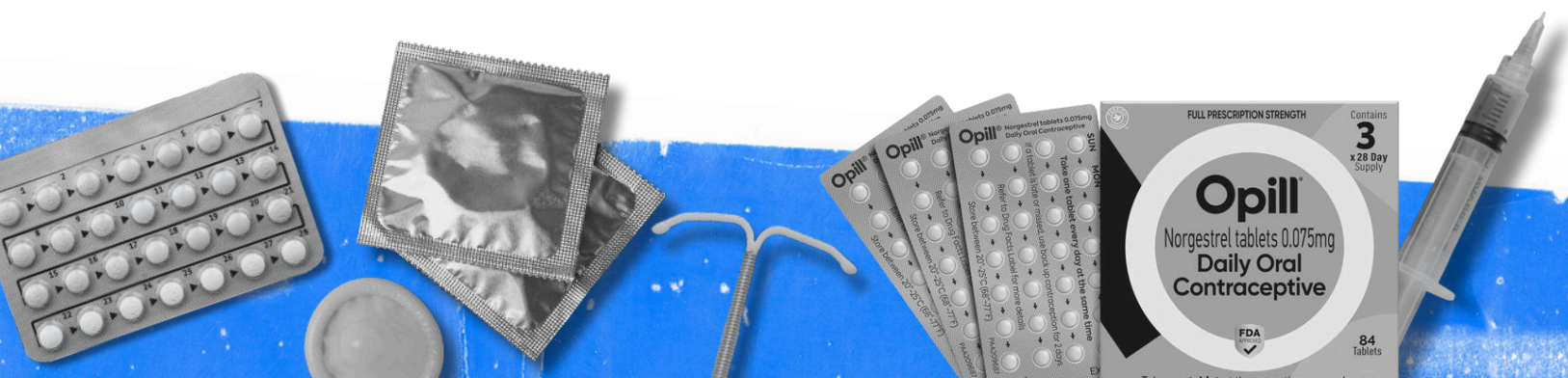
Withdrawal means pulling out the penis before ejaculation. Studies show that it actually is moderately effective. But it's a good idea to combine withdrawal with other methods like condoms and Opill to cover your bases.

## WHAT ABOUT FERTILITY AWARENESS?

Fertility awareness means keeping track of your period, figuring out when you're ovulating, and not having sex during that time. It is also a moderately effective method, because it can be challenging to tell when you're ovulating. This is another case of it's a good idea to combine this method with another one, like condoms and Opill.

## WHICH OF THESE METHODS IS THE BEST ONE?

We've talked about a lot of methods here, and "the best one" absolutely depends on you and what your body needs. **Birth control isn't a one-size-fits-all thing: only you know the method that's best for you (and it might be more than one method).** The most important thing is to have a plan and know what methods you want to use. On average, people who are sexually active but have no method have an 85% chance of becoming pregnant within a year, so if pregnancy prevention is your goal, make a plan! Research different methods and speak to a health care provider to learn more.





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