

# MODULE 1: BIRTH CONTROL 101



# BIRTH CONTROL OPTIONS

THERE ARE A LOT OF BIRTH CONTROL OPTIONS OUT THERE AND WE'RE HERE TO BREAK DOWN EACH ONE AND HELP YOU DECIDE WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOUR BODY!

## Daily birth control pills

Daily birth control pills are exactly what they sound like – a pill taken once a day, every day, to prevent pregnancy. In the US, most birth control pills require a prescription from a health provider family doctor, gynecologist, or an online telehealth service such as [Wisp](#).

However, a progestin-only pill called [Opill](#) is now available over-the-counter and without a prescription. Most drugstores like CVS and Walgreens across the country carry Opill, it requires no ID check, age verification, and anyone can buy it.



## COMBINED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

### Types of combined pills.

Combo pills might go by the brand names Sprintec, Yaz, Junel, or Loestrin. Each brand has a different amount of estrogen and progestin. Your healthcare provider or telehealth service can provide more information about each of these.

### How they work.

Progestin is a form of the hormone progesterone. Progestin-only birth control pills thicken the cervical mucus, which keeps the sperm from entering the uterus and reaching the egg. They may also prevent ovulation in some people.

### Benefits.

Progestin-only pills have fewer contraindications than combination pills, meaning that more people can safely take them if they have certain conditions. This includes people who have migraines with aura and smokers over age 35.

### Tell your healthcare provider if you:

have or have had breast cancer. Progestin-only birth control pills might not be the right choice for you.

### Other considerations about birth control pills:

Birth control pills don't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

### How they work.

Combined birth control pills use a combination of the hormones estrogen and progestin to prevent pregnancy. These pills prevent pregnancy through

- 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
- thinning the lining of the uterus.

These changes are temporary and for many people it's possible to get pregnant quickly once no longer taking a combined birth control pill.

### Benefits.

Besides preventing pregnancy, combined birth control pills can make periods lighter, less painful, and shorter. They can also prevent or reduce acne and unwanted hair growth. There is research that suggests combined birth control pills decrease the risk of cancer of the uterus, ovary, and colon. They can be used to treat conditions such as endometriosis and fibroids.

### Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- are over 35 and smoke more than 15 cigarettes a day
- have multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease
- have a history of heart attack, stroke, or deep vein thrombosis, and migraine headaches with aura.

If any of these conditions apply to you, combined birth control pills may not be the right choice for you.

### Effectiveness.

Combined birth control pills are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy if taken every day. After a missed pill, there's a 24-48 hour window to take the pill and still be protected. [Learn more here](#), or ask a healthcare provider.



## PROGESTIN-ONLY BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

### Effectiveness.

Combined birth control pills are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy if taken them every day at the same time. It is important to take progestin-only birth control pills within the same three-hour window each day to maximize their effectiveness. If you miss a pill by more than 3 hours, it is still possible to prevent pregnancy if you take it as soon as you remember and use a backup method of birth control (like condoms), or avoid having vaginal sex for the next 2 days. [Learn more about what to do about a missed pill here](#), or ask a healthcare provider.

### Types of progestin-only pills.

Some examples of prescription progestin-only pills include Camila, Nor-QD, and Slynd. The first over-the-counter birth control option, Opill, is also a progestin-only pill.



# LONG-ACTING REVERSIBLE BIRTH CONTROL METHODS

**IUDs (intra-uterine devices).** IUDs are small, T-shaped devices that sit inside the uterus and prevent pregnancy by affecting sperm's mobility and preventing it from reaching an egg.

## How they work.

Copper IUDs prevent pregnancy by releasing copper ions that are toxic to sperm. This impairs sperm movement, which prevents them from fertilizing an egg.

## Benefits.

Copper IUDs are extremely effective, and you don't need to remember to take a pill every day. They can be effective for over 10 years after being inserted, which means not having to worry about pregnancy protection until it is removed.

## Tell your healthcare provider if you:

have Wilson's disease or a copper allergy. The copper IUD likely isn't right for you.

## Effectiveness.

Copper IUDs are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. They take effect immediately after insertion and can be used as emergency contraception if inserted within a few days of sex.



**COPPER IUD**

## Types of hormonal IUDs.

There are two kinds of copper IUDs available in the US: Paragard, and a newer option called Miudella.



**HORMONAL IUD**

## How they work.

Hormonal IUDs release a small amount of the hormone progestin into the body over a long period of time. Hormonal IUDs thicken the cervical mucus to prevent sperm from reaching the egg. They can also temporarily stop ovulation.

## Benefits.

Hormonal IUDs are extremely effective, and you don't need to remember to take a pill every day. They can be effective for over several years after being inserted, which means not having to worry about pregnancy protection until it is removed. Hormonal IUDs can also reduce cramps and make periods lighter, and treat the symptoms of conditions like endometriosis and PCOS.

## Tell your healthcare provider if you:

have breast cancer or a history of breast cancer or a pelvic or genital infection. Hormonal IUDs may not be right for you.

## Effectiveness.

Hormonal IUDs are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. They take up to 7 days after insertion before they start working, depending on where you are in your menstrual cycle.

**IUDs don't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs. Some people experience pain during IUD insertion, so folks considering the IUD may want to speak to their provider about pain management.**

**The birth control implant is a tiny stick that releases the hormone progestin into the body that prevents you from getting pregnant.**

## How they work.

A healthcare provider inserts the implant in the arm. Progestin released by the implant thickens the cervical mucus to prevent sperm from reaching an egg, and can prevent ovulation.

## Benefits.

The implant is extremely effective, and you don't need to remember to take a pill every day, which means you don't have to worry about pregnancy prevention until you get it removed. The implant can also reduce period cramps and make your period lighter.

## Tell your healthcare provider if you:

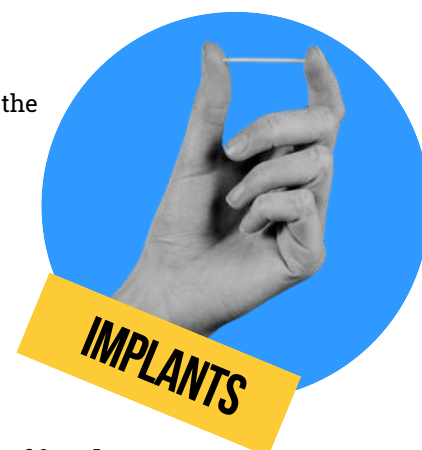
have breast cancer, blood clots, or liver problems. The implant may not be right for you.

## Other considerations about implants:

Implants don't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

## Effectiveness.

The implant is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. They take up to 7 days after insertion before they start working, depending on where you are in your menstrual cycle. The implant lasts for 5 years after being inserted.



**IMPLANTS**

## Types of implants.

In the US, only one type of implant is available, called Nexplanon.

## BIRTH CONTROL RING



### Types of birth control rings.

The two brands of birth control ring available in the US are NuvaRing and Annovera. NuvaRing is used for 5 weeks, and then replaced with a new one each month when the old one is removed. Annovera lasts for 1 year, and is removed once every 21 days for 7 days. Annovera can also be used continuously to skip periods.

The birth control ring is a small, flexible ring that is worn inside the vagina that prevents pregnancy by releasing hormones.

### How they work.

Birth control rings release estrogen and progestin, which prevents ovulation and thickens the cervical mucus, preventing sperm from fertilizing an egg.

### Benefits.

The ring is effective and convenient—a person only needs to think about it once or twice a month. It can make periods lighter and less painful, and can reduce acne, as well as other positive side effects.

### Effectiveness.

With perfect use, the birth control ring is 99% effective. In reality (including mistakes like inserting the ring late), it is about 93% effective.

### Tell your healthcare provider if you:

smoke cigarettes or vape nicotine; have multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease; have a history of heart attack, stroke, or deep vein thrombosis; have a history of migraine headaches with aura. If any of these conditions apply to you, the birth control ring may not be the right choice for you.

### Other considerations about the ring:

The ring doesn't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

### How they work.

The birth control patch is worn on certain parts of the body like your back or butt, and it releases hormones through your skin. Birth control patches use a combination of hormones called estrogen and progestin to prevent pregnancy. These patches prevent pregnancy through 1) preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovaries), 2) thickening the mucus of the cervix to reduce the ability of sperm to enter the uterus, and 3) thinning the lining of the uterus. These changes are temporary—once someone stops using the patch, it is possible to get pregnant very quickly.

### Benefits.

The patch is effective and convenient—you only need to think about replacing it once a week. The patch can also make periods less painful and less heavy, and can reduce acne, as well as other positive side effects.

### Effectiveness.

The patch is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy if used perfectly, meaning using the patch correctly every time. If the patch is changed late or falls off, [read more about what to do here](#).

### Tell your healthcare provider if you:

smoke cigarettes or vape nicotine; have multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease; have a history of heart attack, stroke, or deep vein thrombosis; have a history of migraine headaches with aura. If any of these conditions apply to you, the birth control patch may not be the right choice for you.

### Other considerations about the patch:

The patch doesn't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

## BIRTH CONTROL PATCH



### Types of birth control patches.

In the US, there are two brands of birth control patches: Xulane and Twirla. Both patches use types of progestin and estrogen.

### How they work.

The birth control shot is an injection someone receives every twelve weeks. It contains the hormone progestin, which thickens the cervical mucus and prevents ovulation, which prevents sperm from reaching an egg and fertilizing it.

### Benefits.

The birth control shot is convenient because someone only has to think about getting it every 12 weeks. The shot may make periods lighter or may stop periods altogether.

### Effectiveness.

When given regularly and on time, the shot is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.

### Tell your healthcare provider if you:

have blood clots, breast cancer, liver disease, or want to get pregnant within the next year. The birth control shot may not be right for you.

### Other considerations about the ring:

The shot doesn't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs. Recently, researchers reported a possible connection between prolonged use of depo-provera and intracranial meningioma, a type of non-cancerous brain tumor. Those who are using or considering depo-provera may wish to speak to their doctor about this research."

## BIRTH CONTROL SHOT



### Types of birth control shot.

In the US, there is currently one type of birth control shot available, called Depo-Provera.

## EXTERNAL

### How they work.

Condoms are thin, stretchy coverings worn over a penis during penetrative sex that collect semen. They prevent pregnancy by preventing sperm from entering the vagina and reaching the egg.

### Benefits.

Condoms prevent pregnancy and STIs and have no side effects. They are also easy to get and easy to use. You can even apply to receive 500 of them for free if you're a college student through the [Condom Collective!](#)

### Effectiveness.

If used perfectly, condoms are 97% effective at preventing pregnancy. They can also prevent most STIs and HIV.

**Tell your healthcare provider if you think you may have a latex allergy. You may want to opt for non-latex condoms.**

### Types of external condoms

- Latex
  - Latex condoms are made of rubber and are the most common type of condom.
- Plastic/non-latex
  - Non-latex condoms are made out of different types of plastics. These are safe for folks with latex allergies.
- Lambskin
  - Lambskin condoms are made from the lining of animal intestines. Lambskin condoms only prevent pregnancy, not STIs.



## INTERNAL

### How they work.

Internal condoms are soft, nitrile pouches that go inside the vagina. They create a barrier inside of the vagina which prevents sperm from reaching the egg. They can also be used in the anus to prevent the transmission of STIs and HIV.

### Benefits.

Internal condoms prevent pregnancy and STIs and have no side effects. Internal condoms are also latex free and may feel more comfortable than external condoms.

### Effectiveness.

If used perfectly, internal condoms are 95% effective at preventing pregnancy. They can also prevent most STIs and HIV.

**Tell your healthcare provider if you want to try internal condoms and can't access them—many clinics may have internal condoms available.**

### Types of internal condoms

There are different brands of internal condoms, but the ones that may be most common are FC2. They are also referred to as female condoms, but they can be used by any gender.

## EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

### LEVONORGESTREL



### How they work.

Levonorgestrel EC (like Plan B, Julie, and other brands) are a pill taken after sex within 3 days to prevent pregnancy. They work by preventing or delaying ovulation and preventing the sperm from fertilizing an egg.

### Benefits.

Emergency contraception is a good option to prevent pregnancy when birth control wasn't used. It is easy to get over-the-counter without a prescription. You can even apply to receive free emergency contraception to distribute on your campus if you're a college student with the [EC Access Network!](#)

### Effectiveness.

EC can lower the risk of getting pregnant by 75–89% if taken within 3 days after sex, but the sooner it's taken, the more effective it may be. Levonorgestrel EC may not work for people weigh over 165. If that's the case, Ella or IUD used as EC may be better options.

### Types of levonorgestrel EC.

There are many brands of levonorgestrel EC that are available at drugstores over-the-counter (without a prescription) or online. These brands include Plan B, Julie, Afterpill, EContra, and others, but all include the same ingredient and work exactly the same.

### ULAPRISTAL ACETATE



### How they work.

ella emergency contraception is a pill that prevents pregnancy up to 5 days after sex. ella works by blocking the hormone progesterone to prevent ovulation and prevent sperm from fertilizing an egg.

### Benefits.

ella EC is a good option if someone didn't use another form of birth control and doesn't want to get pregnant. It's also more effective than levonorgestrel EC.

### Effectiveness.

ella lowers the risk of getting pregnant by 85% if taken within 5 days after sex, but the sooner it is taken, the more effective it may be. It's also more effective than levonorgestrel EC and effective for those who weigh between 165 and 195 pounds. For those who weigh more than 195 pounds, IUD EC may be the most effective choice.

### Tell your healthcare provider if you

would like ella since it requires a prescription, or if you are taking any other medications. Don't use ella if you are already pregnant.

# STERILIZATION

## How they work.

Tubal ligation is a procedure that surgically removes or closes part of the fallopian tubes. Bilateral salpingectomy removes the fallopian tubes entirely.

## Benefits.

These procedures are permanent and ensure that you won't get pregnant if you do not want to.

## Effectiveness.

Tubal ligation or bilateral salpingectomy are over 99% effective at preventing pregnancy and are permanent, and this also means you never have to worry about using other forms of birth control ever again (other than to prevent STIs).

## Tell your healthcare provider if you:

want to get pregnant at some point in your life. If so, sterilization probably isn't the right choice for you.

## Other considerations about sterilization:

Sterilization doesn't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

## TUBAL LIGATION OR BILATERAL SALPINGECTOMY



## VASECTOMY



## How they work.

A vasectomy is a surgical procedure that cuts or blocks the vas deferens, the tubes in the scrotum that carry sperm. This prevents sperm from leaving the body and causing pregnancy.

## Benefits.

Vasectomies are very effective and permanent. They can sometimes be reversible, but not always.

## Effectiveness.

Vasectomies are almost 100% effective and permanent, but may take around 2 months to become effective.

## Types of vasectomies.

The two types of vasectomies are the incision method and no-cut method. No-cut methods may have fewer risks of complications and take less time to heal.

## Other considerations about vasectomies:

Vasectomies don't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

## How they work.

Pulling out or withdrawal is removing the penis from the vagina during sex before ejaculation to prevent semen from entering the vagina.

## Effectiveness.

The pullout method often isn't done perfectly (meaning, people don't always pull out in time before ejaculating), so it is 80% effective in reality. If you use the pullout method, it's a good idea to keep emergency contraception on hand to use in case pulling out doesn't happen. Pulling out also works well in combination with other methods, like birth control pills.

## Benefits.

The benefits of the pullout method are that it's always available, it's free, and has no side effects, and it can make other methods more effective.

## Other considerations about withdrawal:

Withdrawal doesn't fully protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.

## WITHDRAWAL/PULLING OUT

# FERTILITY AWARENESS METHODS

## How they work.

Fertility awareness methods are ways to track your menstrual cycle in order to avoid sex on fertile days and prevent pregnancy.

## Effectiveness.

Fertility awareness methods are about 77% to 98% effective. Their effectiveness varies widely because they can be difficult to use and are not typically as effective as other birth control methods. They require a lot of dedication to tracking your fertility and avoiding sex on certain days.

## Benefits.

The benefits of fertility awareness methods are that it's free or cheap and has no side effects.

## Types of fertility awareness methods.

There are a number of different fertility awareness methods based on what fertility signs you will be tracking. Some examples are the temperature method, cervical mucus method, and the calendar method.

## Tell your healthcare provider if you

are interested in using a fertility awareness method. They can help make sure that you know all the factors that can help make them more effective.

## Other considerations about FAM:

Fertility awareness doesn't protect against HIV and STIs. Condoms are extremely effective in preventing HIV and many STIs.



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