

# birth control



*It's  
up  
to  
me*



1-800-942-1054



**Family PACT** (Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment),

a family planning and reproductive health program for uninsured California women and men, offers this booklet “Birth Control: It’s Up to Me.” Modern birth control methods are safe, easy to use and offer health benefits. Birth control can help you and your partner avoid unplanned pregnancies and establish the timing, number and spacing of your children.

***As a Family PACT client, you have a right to:***

- Have information about caring for your body.
- Make decisions for yourself without being pressured or judged by anyone.
- Choose from all birth control methods.
- Talk privately with your health care provider about your sexual health.

***To find a Family PACT provider near you, you can:***

- Call 1-800-942-1054.
- Visit **[www.familypact.org](http://www.familypact.org)** and look in the upper right hand corner. Enter your zip code in the box to find providers in your area. A list will show all the Family PACT providers near you.

***If you would like more information about Family PACT services:***

- Go to **[www.familypact.org](http://www.familypact.org)** to find more information in English or Spanish.
- Call 1-800-942-1054.



# *Birth Control: It's Up to Me*

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This booklet describes your birth control choices. Birth control methods work in different ways to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Each of the different methods has advantages and disadvantages. The most effective method for you will be the one that you are comfortable with and can use correctly all of the time. As you read the information in this booklet, keep in mind that:

- Some methods contain hormones and others do not.
- Some methods are more effective than others.
- The length of protection for each method varies. Some methods only last for one sex act, some last for one week, some a few months or a few years, while others are permanent.
- Only certain methods help protect you from the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- You can choose to use more than one method.
- All of the methods are most effective if you use them correctly and consistently.

This is only an introduction to each birth control method. Your Family PACT provider can help you find a birth control method that works best for you.





## Before choosing a method, ask yourself the following questions:

- When do I plan to have a family?
- How would I feel about a surprise or unplanned pregnancy?
- Do I have more than one partner?
- What methods does my partner like to use?
- Do I have a health problem that would prevent me from using a certain method?
- Do I need a method that can be kept private from others?

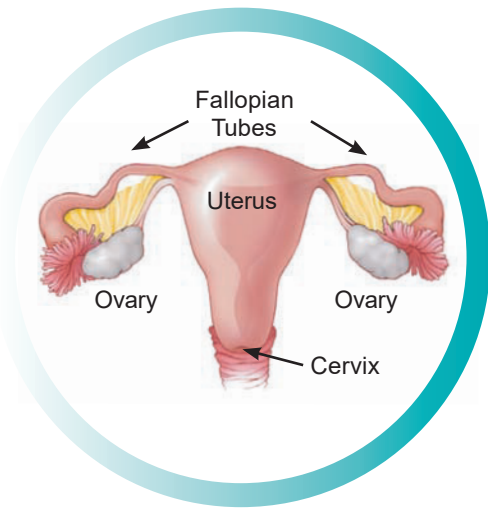
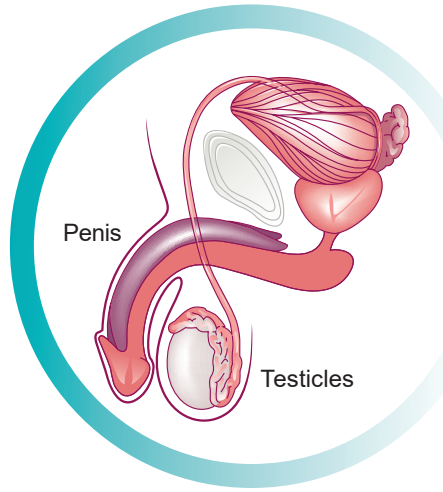
These are personal questions. Your answers will help you find the right birth control method for you. You can talk with your Family PACT provider if you have any questions. All discussions will be private and confidential. No one else will be told what method you choose to use.

# How do birth control methods work?

To understand how birth control methods work, it's important to understand how pregnancy occurs.

Sperm are made in a man's testicles (balls). The sperm move up a long tube that leads to the penis. When a man gets sexually excited, fluid that contains sperm comes out of the penis just before and when he ejaculates (cums). There are about 50 million sperm in this fluid and these sperm can stay alive inside a woman's body for up to 5 days!

Each month an egg is released from a woman's ovary. After the egg leaves the ovary, it moves down the fallopian tubes.



When a man and woman have sex, sperm from the man's penis swim through the cervix, into the uterus and up the fallopian tubes. If a sperm joins with an egg, this is called fertilization. If the fertilized egg attaches to the uterus, the woman may become pregnant.

Birth control methods prevent pregnancy in one or more ways. Birth control can work by:

- Stopping the egg from coming out of the ovary,
- Stopping the sperm from fertilizing the egg, or
- Keeping the fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus.

# Birth Control: It's Up to Me

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# Emergency Contraception Pills

It is good to pick a birth control method that you can use all the time. **But sometimes accidents happen.** Emergency Contraception (EC) is especially for these times. These pills are made of hormones like the ones made by a woman's body. You can take EC pills to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. **The sooner you take them, the better they work.** Some people refer to this birth control method as the “morning-after pill,” but EC is effective up to 5 days after unprotected sex!

## EC can prevent pregnancy by:

- Stopping the egg from coming out of the ovary,
- Stopping the sperm from fertilizing the egg, or
- Keeping a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus.

## You can use EC if you had sex and:

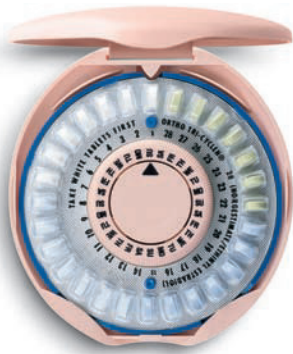
- You didn't use your birth control method correctly.
- Your birth control method failed.
- You didn't use any form of birth control.
- Someone forced you to have sex.





**If you are thinking about using EC pills, keep in mind that:**

- EC pills will not work if you are already pregnant.
- EC does **not** cause an abortion. EC is **not** the same as an abortion.
- EC does not replace a regular method of birth control. It is only used for emergencies. (If you are having sex, use one of the methods listed in this booklet.)
- You do not need a doctor's exam or Pap smear to get it.
- Family PACT only covers the cost of EC pills when it is prescribed to a woman by her Family PACT provider.



Pill



Ring

## Hormonal Methods

Hormonal methods contain hormones like the ones made by a woman's body. These hormones are called estrogen and progestin. Hormonal methods prevent pregnancy by changing the levels of hormones in a woman's body. This change in hormone levels prevents pregnancy by stopping the egg from coming out of the ovary, by stopping the sperm from fertilizing an egg, or by keeping a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus.

### Advantages:

- Very effective if used correctly.
- Easy to use.
- Birth control pills may decrease the risk of cancer of the ovary and the uterus.
- The pill, patch, and ring may make periods more regular and reduce cramps.
- Do not interrupt sex.

### Disadvantages:

- No protection from HIV or other STIs.
- Need a prescription.
- Hormones may cause side effects. These side effects include headaches or changes in your breasts, menstrual cycle, weight, or mood.

You can choose from several types of hormonal methods. Although all hormonal methods work in a similar way, they have some differences.



Patch



Injection



Implant

## Pill

You take one tablet by mouth every day.

- Works best if you take the pill at the same time every day.
- Makes periods more regular.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using the pill.

## Ring

You put a soft, rubber ring in your vagina and take it out three weeks later.

- There is nothing to remember on a daily basis.
- Put in and taken out of your vagina with your fingers.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using the ring.
- Most women who use the ring don't feel it once it is in the vagina.

## Patch

Like a small bandage, you put it on your skin and change it once a week for three weeks.

- There is nothing to remember on a daily basis.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using the patch.
- May become loose or fall off, and may irritate the skin.

## Injection

Your health care provider gives you a shot that lasts for 12 weeks.

- There is nothing to remember on a daily basis.
- Must return to your provider to get your shot every 12 weeks.
- No one can tell you are using it.
- May take longer to get pregnant after you stop using it.

## Implant

Your health care provider places a soft, thin rod under the skin in your arm that works for 3 years.

- There is nothing to remember on a daily basis.
- A health care provider must put the rod in and take it out.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using the implant.



# Intrauterine Contraception

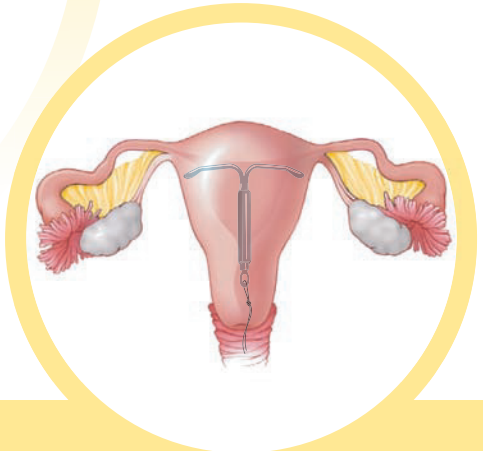
Intrauterine contraception (also known as IUC or IUD) is a small, T-shaped piece of plastic that is placed inside a woman's uterus by a clinician. The IUC stays in place until a clinician takes it out. This method of birth control works by stopping the sperm from fertilizing an egg and/or by keeping a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus.

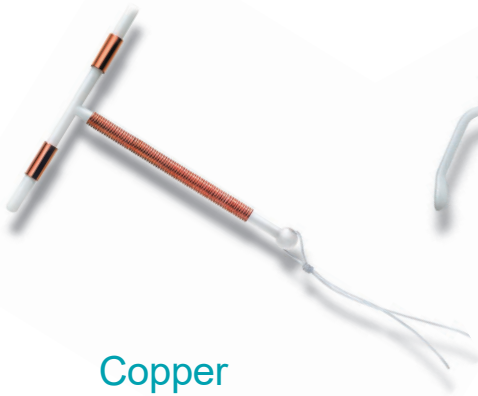
## Advantages:

- Very effective.
- Easy to use.
- Long-term protection.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using IUC.
- Can be used while breastfeeding.

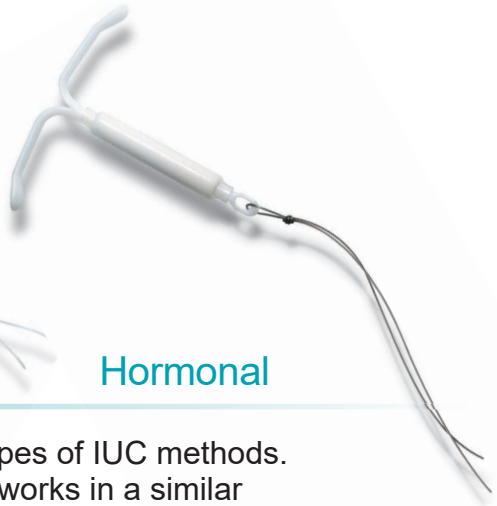
## Disadvantages:

- No protection from HIV or other STIs.
- Must be put in and taken out by a clinician.
- Once a month, check the strings to make sure the IUC is still in place as instructed by your provider.





Copper



Hormonal

You can choose from two types of IUC methods. Although each IUC method works in a similar way, they have some differences:

## Copper

A T-shaped device with copper on the outside.

- Lasts for ten years.
- Can cause heavier bleeding or cramping.
- No hormonal side effects.

## Hormonal

A T-shaped device with hormones inside.

- Lasts for 3-5 years depending on which IUC you choose.
- Can lighten your periods or cause your periods to stop.





Male Condom



Internal Condom

## Barrier Methods

Barrier methods work by stopping the sperm from fertilizing the egg. Barrier methods can either be used alone or with another method of birth control for more protection.

### Advantages:

- No hormonal side effects.
- Can be used with other birth control methods.
- Only use them when you have sex.
- Can be used while breastfeeding.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using barrier methods.

### Disadvantages:

- May not be as effective as other birth control methods.
- Can break or leak.
- Need practice to use correctly.
- Must store away from heat.
- Allergies or irritation can occur (rare).

You can choose from four types of barrier methods. Although each barrier method works in a similar way, they have some differences.





Diaphragm



Cervical Cap

## Male Condom

A latex (natural rubber), polyurethane (man-made rubber), or lambskin (natural material) that is rolled on to a man's erect penis before sex begins.

- Anyone can buy them without a prescription.
- Latex and polyurethane condoms help protect against HIV and other STIs.
- Must use a new condom every time you have sex.
- Sex can feel different.
- Must stop to put the condom on before any sexual contact.
- May need to use water-based lubricant.

## Internal Condom

A polyurethane sheath that covers the inside of a woman's vagina.

- Anyone can buy them without a prescription.
- Helps protect against HIV and other STIs.
- Must use a new condom every time you have sex.
- Sex can feel different.
- Must stop to put the condom in place before any sexual contact.
- May need to use lubricant.

## Diaphragm and Cervical Cap

Soft latex cups that create a barrier and hold spermicide over the cervix.

- Can be placed in the vagina several hours before sex.
- Need to see a clinician for a fitting and a prescription.
- Can cause bladder infections among diaphragm users, if not fitted properly.
- No protection from HIV or other STIs.
- Put in and taken out of your vagina with your fingers.
- Must stay in the vagina for six hours after sex.
- Must be used with spermicides (see next page).



Foam



Suppository

# Spermicides

Spermicides come in many forms: film, foam, jelly, sponge, and suppositories. Spermicides are placed in the vagina before sex begins. All spermicides work by killing the sperm. Spermicides can either be used alone or can be used with another method of birth control for more protection. Spermicides are often used with a barrier method.

## Advantages:

- No hormonal side effects.
- Easy to use.
- Anyone can buy them without a prescription.
- Provide extra lubrication during sex.
- Can be used while breastfeeding.
- Can get pregnant as soon as you stop using spermicides.
- Only use them when you have sex.

## Disadvantages:

- Not as effective as other birth control methods.
- Must put them in the vagina before sex and use more every time you have sex.
- May irritate the vagina or the penis.
- May increase the risk of HIV.
- May have a taste and smell.
- Can be messy.



Sponge



Film



Jelly

There are many types of spermicides. Although each spermicide works the same way, they have some differences:

### Film

A small, thin sheet of spermicide that turns into a gel that covers the cervix.

- Put it deep into the vagina with your fingers.
- Must wait at least 15 minutes before having sex.

### Foam

A spermicide that looks like shaving cream.

- Put it into the vagina with an applicator.
- Works right away.

### Sponge

A soft sponge that has spermicide in it.

- Put it deep into the vagina with your fingers.
- Works right away and up to 24 hours, even if you have sex more than once.
- Must stay in the vagina 6 hours after sex.

### Jelly

A gel-like liquid spermicide.

- Most commonly used with a diaphragm or cervical cap.
- Works right away.

### Suppository

A waxy, bullet-shaped spermicide that turns into a cream that covers the cervix.

- Put it deep into the vagina with your fingers or an applicator.
- Must wait 10 to 15 minutes before having sex.



# Natural Methods

## Fertility Awareness Method (FAM) and Natural Family Planning (NFP)

These methods are ways that a woman can use to keep track of the monthly changes in her body. By checking changes in temperature and cervical mucus, she can tell when she is at risk of getting pregnant. During this time, she must use another birth control method or she must not have sex.

### Advantages:

- No hormonal side effects.
- Does not affect periods.

### Disadvantages:

- Depending on how it is used, it may not be as effective as other methods.
- It can be hard to tell when a woman is at risk of getting pregnant.
- Cannot be used by women with irregular periods or who have no periods at all.
- You must learn how to use it correctly.
- Works best with partner support.
- No protection from HIV or other STIs.
- Need to abstain (not have sex) or use another form of birth control during the times you could get pregnant.



# Lactation Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

When a woman exclusively breastfeeds her baby (no bottle-feeding), she is unlikely to get pregnant. There is nothing to buy and nothing to use. Breastfeeding causes the body to release hormones that stop the egg from coming out of the ovary. A woman can use this birth control method for up to six months after giving birth to a baby.

In order for this method to be effective, a woman must:

- Not have had a period since the baby was born.
- ONLY breastfeed (no bottle feeding) every time her baby wants to be fed.
- Breastfeed at least every 4 hours during the day.
- Breastfeed at least every 6 hours during the night.
- Pumping the breasts does not count as breastfeeding.

## Advantages:

- Effective if done correctly.
  - Can be used right after the birth of a baby.
  - No hormonal side effects.
  - Health benefits for both mother and baby.

## Disadvantages:

- May be difficult to breastfeed as often as needed.
- Women are advised to only use LAM for up to six months.
- No protection from HIV or other STIs.



# Sterilization

Both men and women who do not want more children can have a procedure to make them sterile. Sterilization is a permanent method of preventing pregnancy. If there is a chance that you will want children later, choose another method.

## Advantages:

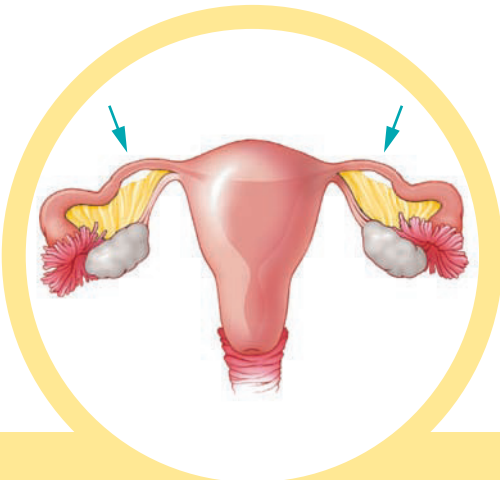
Very effective.

- No more worries about pregnancy.
- The procedure is quick and it does not take long to get better.
- No long term side effects.
- May decrease the risk of cancer of the ovary.
- Nothing to remember or buy.

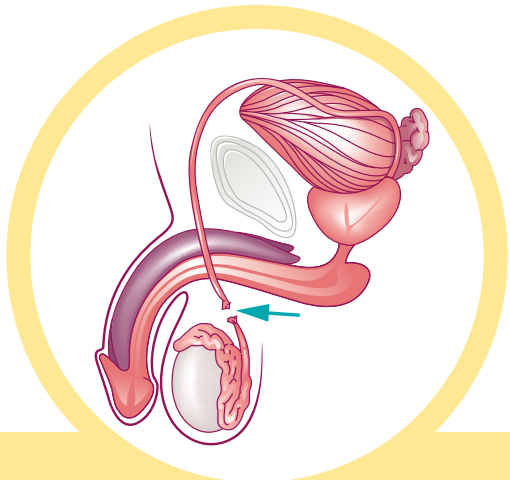
## Disadvantages:

- No protection from HIV or other STIs.
- If you change your mind later, it may not be possible to reverse it.
- There may be a small chance of infection or bleeding after the procedure.

**Tubal ligation or Micro-inserts – Sterilization procedures for a woman.** The tubes that carry the eggs from the ovaries to the uterus are closed.



**Vasectomy – Sterilization procedure for a man.** The tubes that carry sperm from the testicles to the penis are closed.



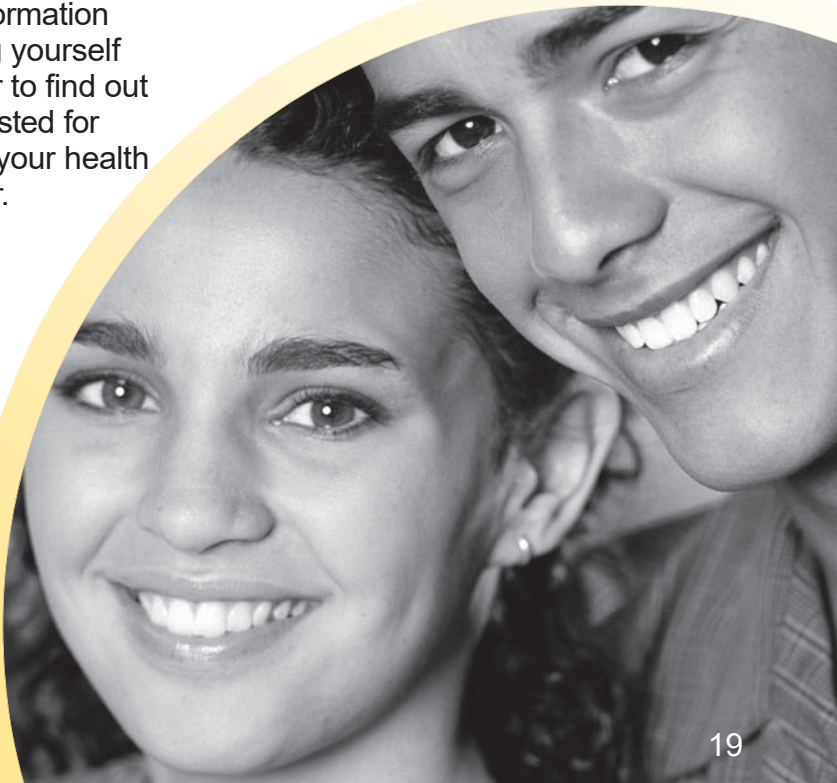
# Protecting Yourself from STIs

STIs are infections that you may get by having sexual contact with the mouth, penis, vagina or anus of someone who has an STI. They can cause serious problems if they go untreated. STIs can cause women and men to become sterile (unable to have children). Symptoms of STIs include:

- Unusual discharge from the penis or vagina.
- Bumps or sores on the penis or vagina.
- Pain during urination.
- Pain in the lower abdominal area.

Even if you don't have any of these symptoms, you could still have an STI. Many people who have an STI have no symptoms at all. If the method you choose does not protect you from STIs, consider also using a male or internal condom.

For more information on protecting yourself from STIs, or to find out how to get tested for STIs, talk to your health care provider.



	Method	Risk of getting pregnant	Length of protection	Return fertility after stopping use	Privacy of use	Protection against STIs/HIV	Provides other health benefits
Most effective	Intrauterine Contraceptive	Very Low	3-10 years	Immediately	Partner may feel the string during sex	NO	YES
	Male and Female Sterilization	Very Low	Permanent	Never	Very private	NO	YES (female)
	Implant	Very Low	3 years	Immediately	Private	NO	YES
Effective	Injection	Very Low	3 months	3-18 months	Very private	NO	YES
	Pill	Low	1 month	Immediately	Very private	NO	YES
	Patch	Low	1 week	Immediately	May be felt or seen by others	NO	UNKNOWN
	Vaginal Ring	Low	1 month	Immediately	Partner may feel it during sex	NO	UNKNOWN
Least effective	Condom	Higher	One sex act	Immediately	Not private	YES	NO
	Diaphragm and Cervical Cap	Higher	Up to 24 hours	Immediately	May not be private	NO	NO
	Spermicide (Including the Sponge)	Higher	Up to 24 hours	Immediately	Not private	NO	NO
	Natural Method	Higher	Continuous	Immediately	Private	NO	NO



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