



## CHOOSING YOUR BIRTH CONTROL METHOD

**Need no-cost birth control methods and family planning services? The Family Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment (Family PACT) Program is here to help.**

**All these methods are safe for most people to use.**

- » If you have a history of medical problems, talk with your Family PACT provider about which method are safest for you.

**Some methods work better than others.**

- » Some methods like implants and intrauterine devices (IUDs) work very well no matter what. Other methods work well only if you use them the right way every time.
- » Each of the different methods has advantages and disadvantages.
- » The length of protection for each method varies. Some methods only last for one sex act while others last up to 12 years, and others are permanent.
- » You may choose to use certain methods together like condoms and spermicides.
- » Effectiveness rates are for typical use which is defined as the risk of pregnancy in 100 sexually active people who use the method for one year. (Reference: *Contraceptive Technology*, 22nd Edition, 2023).

**Forgot to use birth control?**

- » You can still prevent pregnancy. Ask your provider about emergency contraception (EC) pills.

**Want to protect yourself from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections?**

- » Use external and internal condoms every time you have sexual intercourse or abstain from sexual intercourse to protect yourself against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



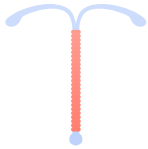
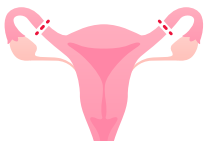

**Before choosing a method, ask yourself:**



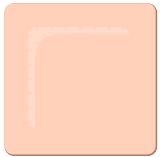
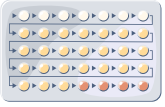
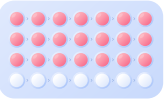
- » Do you think you might like to have (more) children at some point?
- » When do you think that might be?
- » How important is it to you to prevent pregnancy until then?
- » Do you have a health problem that could make certain methods unsafe for you?
- » Do you need a method that can be kept private from others?
- » Which methods have you or you and your partner(s) talked about?

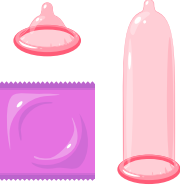
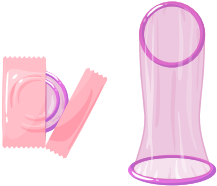



**Find a Family PACT provider near you:**

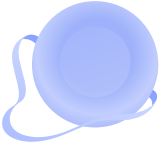



- » Visit [www.FamilyPACT.org](http://www.FamilyPACT.org), click on "Find Providers" and enter your zip code or call toll-free **1-800-942-1054**.

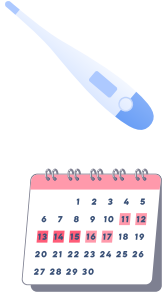


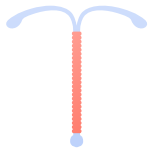


Birth Control Method	How To Use It	How Well It Works	Pros	Cons	Helpful Info
<p><b>Long-Acting Methods:</b> These methods are the most effective and easy to use. None of these methods protect against HIV and STIs. Use condoms (external or internal) when you have sex to protect yourself from infections.</p>					
<p><b>Birth Control Implant</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider places it under the skin of the arm.</li> <li>» Lasts up to 3-5 years.</li> </ul>	<p>99.9%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Few side effects.</li> <li>» Once in, nothing more to do.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can cause changes in periods in the first 3-6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» After 3 years, it must be taken out and replaced with a new one.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hormonal IUD</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider places it in the uterus.</li> <li>» Lasts up to 3-8 years depending on which type is placed.</li> </ul>	<p>99.6 %</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Few side effects.</li> <li>» Once in, nothing more to do.</li> <li>» With longer use, can make periods lighter or stop entirely.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can cause cramping when placed.</li> <li>» Can cause changes in periods in the first 3-6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» There are 4 different types.</li> <li>» Check strings once a month to make sure the IUD is still there.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Copper IUD</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider places it in the uterus.</li> <li>» Lasts up to 10 years.</li> </ul>	<p>99.2%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Few side effects.</li> <li>» No hormones.</li> <li>» Once in, nothing more to do.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can cause cramping when placed.</li> <li>» Can cause heavier periods in the first 3-6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be used as emergency contraception.</li> <li>» Check strings once a month to make sure the IUD is still there.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Permanent Birth Control (Tubal Ligation)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider cuts the tubes (fallopian tubes) that carry the eggs from the ovaries to the uterus.</li> </ul>	<p>99.5%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Intended to be permanent.</li> <li>» Works right away.</li> <li>» Does not change your sex life.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Requires surgery in surgicenter.</li> <li>» Depending on the method chosen, it may not be reversible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Consent must be signed 30 days prior to the procedure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Permanent Birth Control (Vasectomy)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider cuts the tubes (vas deferens) that carry sperm from the testicles to the penis.</li> </ul>	<p>99.8%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Intended to be permanent.</li> <li>» Works right away.</li> <li>» Does not change your sex life.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Performed as an office surgical procedure.</li> <li>» Difficult surgical procedure to reverse the vasectomy. It may not be effective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Consent must be signed 30 days prior to the procedure.</li> <li>» Afterwards, get a sperm count.</li> </ul>

Birth Control Method	How to Use It	How Well It Works	Pros	Cons	Helpful Info
<p><b>Hormonal Methods:</b> All of these methods are safe for most people to use. They may cause changes in your periods, spotting, and other side effects. None of these methods protect against HIV and STIs. Use condoms (external or internal) when you have sex to protect yourself from infections.</p>					
<p><b>Birth Control Shot</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider gives a shot in the arm every 12 weeks.</li> <li>» You can inject it yourself in the stomach or thigh.</li> </ul>	96%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Easy to use.</li> <li>» Light or no periods.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» May cause weight gain.</li> <li>» Long-term use may cause calcium loss in bones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» There are two types.</li> <li>» May need to take calcium supplements to strengthen bones.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Birth Control Vaginal Ring</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider prescribes it</li> <li>» Use the ring for 3 weeks, take it out for 1 week.</li> </ul>	93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Easy to use.</li> <li>» Does not require outside help to put in or take out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Must be comfortable with inserting fingers into the vagina to put it in and take it out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» There are two types: monthly ring; yearly ring.</li> <li>» Can stay in during sex.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Birth Control Patch</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider prescribes it.</li> <li>» Place a new patch on the skin (hips, upper arms, back, or shoulders) each week.</li> </ul>	93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Easy to use.</li> <li>» Does not require outside help to put on or take off.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» May cause a localized skin rash where patch is placed.</li> <li>» May be visible to others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Change the patch on the same day of the week for 3 weeks.</li> <li>» Don't wear a patch on the fourth week.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Birth Control Pill (Combined)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider prescribes it.</li> <li>» Take 1 pill by mouth every day for 21 days, then take no pills or hormone-free pills for 7 days.</li> </ul>	93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Easy to use.</li> <li>» Prevents cramps and heavy bleeding during periods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Must take the pill every day at the same time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can help make periods more regular.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Progestin-Only Pill (Mini-Pill)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider prescribes it.</li> <li>» Opill® is available over-the-counter.</li> <li>» Take 1 pill by mouth every day. Some types have no hormone-free interval.</li> </ul>	93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Easy to use.</li> <li>» Good choice for people who either cannot take estrogen or just had a baby.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Must be taken at the same time every day.</li> <li>» May experience irregular periods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Time-sensitive.</li> <li>» Missing pills or taking pills at different times each day makes it less effective.</li> </ul>

Birth Control Method	How to Use It	How Well It Works	Pros	Cons	Helpful Info
<b>Barrier Methods:</b> These methods must be used every time you have sex. They have no hormones. Only external and internal condoms protect against HIV and STIs. The others methods do not.					
<b>External Condoms</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Use a new condom every time you have sexual intercourse or engage in a new sex act (oral, vaginal, or anal).</li> <li>» Place it on the erect penis before it enters the vagina.</li> </ul>	87%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Protects against HIV and STIs.</li> <li>» There are many kinds (sizes, flavors, colors, textures, lubricated/ non-lubricated).</li> <li>» Can buy from any pharmacy/ drugstore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Not good for those with a latex allergy.</li> <li>» Can break or slip off.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Store condoms in a cool, dry place.</li> <li>» Use only water-based lubricants.</li> <li>» If allergic to latex, can get latex-free condoms.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Condoms</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Use a new condom every time you have sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal).</li> <li>» Insert into vagina before sex.</li> </ul>	79%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Protects against HIV and STIs.</li> <li>» Made of nitrile so good for those with latex allergy.</li> <li>» Can buy from any pharmacy/ drugstore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Takes practice to learn how to put it in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Take your time putting it in.</li> <li>» Use only water-based lubricants.</li> </ul>
<b>Spermicides</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Placed in the vagina with an applicator.</li> <li>» Use it every time you have sex.</li> </ul>	79%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Comes in many forms: cream, gel, jelly, foam, film, and suppository.</li> <li>» Can buy from any pharmacy/ drugstore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be messy.</li> <li>» Not good for those allergic to spermicide ingredients.</li> <li>» May increase risk of bladder or vaginal infections.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Works best if used with condoms or another barrier method.</li> </ul>
<b>Diaphragm</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider measures and fits you for one.</li> <li>» Use it every time you have sex.</li> </ul>	83%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be put in ahead of time.</li> <li>» Can be reused multiple times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Takes practice to learn how to put it in and take it out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Must be used with spermicides.</li> </ul>
<b>Cervical Cap</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider measures and fits you for one.</li> <li>» Use it every time you have sex.</li> </ul>	79%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be put in ahead of time.</li> <li>» Can be reused multiple times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Takes practice to learn how to put it in and take it out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Must be used with spermicides.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Sponge</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Contains spermicides.</li> <li>» Lasts for 24 hours no matter how many times you have sex.</li> </ul>	83%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be put in ahead of time.</li> <li>» Can buy from any pharmacy/ drugstore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Takes practice to learn how to put it in and take it out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Good to have extra sponges on hand.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vaginal Gel (Phexxi)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider prescribes it.</li> <li>» Put the pre-filled applicator into the vagina.</li> <li>» Use a new applicator every time you have sex.</li> </ul>	79%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» No hormonal side effects.</li> <li>» Can be put in up to one hour ahead of time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Takes practice to learn how to put it in.</li> <li>» May increase risk of bladder or vaginal infections.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Check to make sure you and your partner(s) are not allergic to any ingredients in the gel.</li> </ul>
Birth Control Method	How to Use It	How Well It Works	Pros	Cons	Helpful Info
<p><b>Natural Family Planning Methods:</b> You and your partner must work together to use these methods. Abstinence can protect you from HIV and other STIs, but other natural family planning methods do not.</p>					
<p><b>Abstinence</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» You and your partner choose not to have sex.</li> <li>» Only protects against HIV and STIs if abstaining from all types of sex (oral, vaginal, and anal).</li> </ul>	Up to 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can decide not to have sex if you have no other method.</li> <li>» No hormonal side effects.</li> <li>» It is free.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» If you decide to have sex or engage in sexual activities that put a penis near a vagina (genital rubbing) you will not be protected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Talk with your partner about it.</li> <li>» Keep an external/ internal condom on hand.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Withdrawal (Pulling Out)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The penis is pulled out of the vagina before ejaculation (cumming).</li> <li>» Use it every time you have sex.</li> </ul>	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Better than not using any birth control.</li> <li>» No hormonal side effects.</li> <li>» It is free.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Must interrupt sex.</li> <li>» High risk of pregnancy if not timed correctly when pulling the penis out of the vagina.</li> <li>» Hard to do it perfectly every time.</li> <li>» Takes a lot of self-control.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Decide what you want to do ahead of time.</li> <li>» Talk with your partner about it.</li> <li>» More effective if used with a barrier method.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Fertility Awareness Methods</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Keep track of monthly changes in your body temperature and cervical mucus.</li> <li>» Track days when you're most likely to get pregnant (fertile).</li> <li>» Avoid sex or use a barrier method on fertile days.</li> </ul>	77%-98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» They are free.</li> <li>» Many apps are available to help track the changes.</li> <li>» Multiple different methods for tracking.</li> <li>» Learn how your body works.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can take time to learn to use correctly.</li> <li>» Must have regular periods to make it work.</li> <li>» Must avoid sex or use a barrier method on fertile days.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Talk with your partner about it.</li> <li>» Be diligent in tracking changes every day.</li> <li>» Both partners must cooperate to make it work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lactation Amenorrhea Method (Breastfeeding)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A person exclusively breastfeeds their baby (no bottle-feeding, only nursing), as a form of birth control.</li> </ul>	Highly effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be used right after the birth of a baby.</li> <li>» No hormonal side effects.</li> <li>» Health benefits for both mother and baby.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Works for up to six months after giving birth.</li> <li>» Must not have had a period since giving birth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Only breastfeeding (no bottle-feeding) every time.</li> <li>» Pumping the breasts does not count.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Birth Control Method</b></p>	<p><b>How to Use It</b></p>	<p><b>How Well It Works</b></p>	<p><b>Pros</b></p>	<p><b>Cons</b></p>	<p><b>Helpful Info</b></p>
<p><b>Emergency Contraception (EC):</b> If your birth control method failed or you didn't use one, you can use EC to prevent pregnancy if used within 5 days of unprotected sex. The sooner you take it, the better it works.</p>					
<p><b>EC Pills</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Take the pill by mouth.</li> <li>» Comes in 1 or 2-pill dose.</li> </ul>	Highly effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can buy from any pharmacy/drugstore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Does not work if you're already pregnant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Ella® works better for people ≥ 165 lbs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Copper IUD</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Health care provider places it in the uterus.</li> <li>» Lasts up to 10 years.</li> </ul>	99.2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Few side effects.</li> <li>» No hormones.</li> <li>» Once in, nothing more to do.</li> <li>» Private.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can cause cramping when placed.</li> <li>» Can cause heavier periods in the first 3-6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Can be used as a form of long term birth control after placement.</li> </ul>



© 2024 California Department of Health Care Services, Office of Family Planning. All rights reserved. Revised July 2024. For more information or additional copies, scan the QR code or visit: [www.FamilyPACT.org](http://www.FamilyPACT.org).