

## Pills



Birth control pills are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. You must remember to take one pill everyday, even if you do not have sex. They are most effective if you take them at the same time every day. They **do not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You must remember to take them every day. You need a prescription.

**Watch for:** Headache, nausea, a change in your periods (usually lighter), emotional changes.

## Patches



The patch is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. The patch contains the same medicine as the pills, but it goes through your skin. You apply one patch a week for 3 weeks, then no patch for one week so that your period will come. They **do not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You must wear the patches continuously for 3 weeks. You will need replacement patches if they come off or get lost. You need a prescription.

**Watch for:** Redness of the skin, headache, nausea, a change in your periods.

## IUD (intrauterine device) Paragard



The IUD is a small T-shaped device made of plastic and copper that the doctor inserts into your uterus. It can stay there for 10 years, and is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. It can be removed whenever you want. There is a small chance that you could get an infection in your uterus when it is put in. Some women say their periods are heavier with the IUD. The Paragard IUD has no hormones. There are other IUDs that **do** have hormones in them, and those can make your periods lighter or go away altogether. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** A doctor must put it in. It is expensive at first, but then it lasts 10 years.

**Watch for:** Signs of infection (fever, vaginal discharge).

## Injections of Depo-Provera



Depo is a hormone that is given by injection in your hip muscle once every three months. It is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. It will make your periods change a lot—first they may be very heavy, then lighter and then they might go away altogether. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** A nurse at the clinic must give you the injection every three months.

**Watch for:** Very irregular periods, weight gain, it may make your bones weaker, it may take up to a year to get pregnant once you stop using the injections.

## Vaginal ring



The vaginal ring is a small, soft plastic ring that you put into your vagina. It doesn't matter where it is in your vagina. It stays there for three weeks, then you take it out for one week so your period will come. It is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. It contains the same medicines as pills. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You must be comfortable putting it in and taking it out. You need a prescription.

**Watch for:** A change in your vaginal discharge.

## Condoms

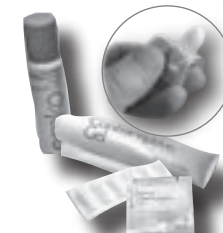


The condom is 97% effective at preventing pregnancy, and it also prevents sexually transmitted infections. You buy them at the store or get them free at the clinic, and you must use a new one every time you have sex. Men put the male condom on their penis when it is hard. Condoms **do** prevent sexually transmitted infections. It's a good idea to always use condoms with whichever other method you choose.

**Requirements:** You must use a new one every time you have sex.

**Watch for:** There are no side effects of condoms, except if you are allergic to latex.

## Spermicides



Spermicides are gels, foams, film, creams or capsules that you put in the vagina before having sex. They are 90% effective at preventing pregnancy. They are more effective if you use them with a condom or diaphragm. You can buy them at the pharmacy. They **do not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You must put them in the vagina every time you have sex.

**Watch for:** A change in vaginal discharge.

## Diaphragm



The diaphragm is a soft rubber device that you insert in your vagina to cover your cervix. It must be used with spermicide jelly. It is 90% effective at preventing pregnancy. The doctor must determine which size is best for you, then you get a prescription for it. It is inexpensive and lasts for five years. It gives some protection against sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You must feel comfortable inserting it before you have sex. It must stay in the vagina for 8 hours after having sex.

**Watch for:** Small chance of bladder infections. Don't use if you are allergic to latex.

## Sponge



There is a small round sponge which contains spermicides that you can buy at the pharmacy. You insert it in the vagina every time you have sex. It is 90% effective at preventing pregnancy. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You must use a new one every time you have sex.

**Watch for:** A change in your vaginal discharge.

## Natural method



The natural method is when the couple pays close attention to the woman's menstrual cycles and the changes her body goes through during the month to determine when she can get pregnant (fertile days) and when she can't. The couple must not have intercourse on the days when she is fertile, or use a condom on those days. It can be 90% effective if the couple is doing it correctly. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** You should attend a class on this method to be sure you are doing it correctly. It is very important that both the man and the woman are involved and communicating well.

**Watch for:** It can be difficult to plan sexual activity.

## Withdrawal



In this method, the man pulls his penis out of the vagina right before he ejaculates (finishes) so that the sperm don't get inside. It is only 80% effective. The problem with this method is that all men release a little of the liquid while they are having sex, before they finish, so it's impossible to avoid getting some sperm in the vagina. It is more effective to *use this method with other forms of protection*, like spermicides, IUD, or pills. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** The man must pull his penis out of the vagina before he ejaculates every time you have sex.

**Watch for:** There are no side effects of this method, but there is a much higher risk of pregnancy.

## Sterilization



Both men and women can have a surgery to provide permanent birth control. In men, the small tubes between the testicles and the penis are cut and sown closed, so that the man can no longer make a woman pregnant. In men there are little tubes between the penis and the testicles. These tubes are cut and sown closed so that the man cannot get a woman pregnant. In women there are little tubes between the ovaries and the uterus. These tubes are cut and sown closed so that the woman cannot get

pregnant. Both surgeries are considered permanent and not reversible. They **do not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** Talk to your doctor to make arrangements for this surgery.

**Watch for:** Talk to your doctor to review the risks.

## Emergency contraception



If you have sex without protection, or if the method you are using fails (the condom breaks or comes off, the diaphragm wasn't in), you can use pills **after** you have sex to prevent pregnancy. The pills should be taken as soon as possible after having unprotected sex, but can be taken up to five days later. It's best for all couples to have the pills in your house all the time, so you can take them right away if you have unprotected sex. You need a prescription in Oregon, but you can ask for them at a pharmacy in Washington and get them without a prescription. They are also available in the clinic and the health department. It **does not** prevent sexually transmitted infections.

**Requirements:** Pills must be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

**Watch for:** Your period will probably be different that month—it may be late or early or heavy or light.

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# Methods of preventing pregnancy



**Family planning is an important part of good health!**