

Contraceptives

- Contraceptives reduce the need for unsafe abortions.
- Family planning reinforces people's rights to decide how many children they would like to have and how they will be spaced.
- There is a contraceptive method to suit everyone.
- You can choose between either long- or short-term methods that suit your lifestyle.

Contraceptive methods – Know your options

1. Contraceptive implant (Implanon)

Hormonal method: A small hormone-releasing silicone rod is inserted under the skin by a health care provider.

This reversible method is 99% effective, can remain active for a period of three years and is easy to hide.

Some women have reported that it reduces heavy and painful periods.

2. Contraceptive injection

Hormonal injection: This contraceptive method involves the injection of hormones in a muscle and remains effective for up to three months.

It is highly effective, does not require daily attention and is widely available.

3. The combined oral contraceptives / The pill

Hormonal method: The pill is a small tablet containing hormones, which has to be swallowed by the user at the same time every day.

It has a 91% efficacy and is widely available and easy to use.

It can be safely taken over an extended period.

Some contraceptive pills have been found to relieve acne.

4. Male condom

Barrier method: A condom is a thin sheath made from latex or polyurethane film that is placed over a man's erect penis before having sex.

It is easy to use, has an 82% efficacy and offers protection against STIs and HIV.

Condoms can be easily kept available by users, are hormone free and their effectiveness is not affected by the use of any medication.

5. Female condom

Barrier method: A female condom is a sheath that is placed inside a woman's vagina before sexual intercourse. This easy-to-use method is 79% effective and offers protection against STIs and HIV.

These hormone-free condoms can be easily kept available by users and their effectiveness is not influenced by the use of any medication.

6. Emergency pill

Hormonal method: Emergency pills are hormone-based pills that are used to prevent conception in the event of unprotected sex.

If used as directed, they have an efficacy of 58%.

Emergency pills should not be regarded as a contraceptive method and are most effective when taken 24 to 72 hours after unprotected sex has occurred.

NB: It is highly advisable to discuss the different available methods of contraception with your health care provider to find the type that is perfect for you.

FAQs about contraceptives

1. Do I have to take the pill every day?

- Yes, the pill must be taken at the same time every day. You need to decide on a time that suits your lifestyle and routine.

2. How long after having unprotected sex can an emergency pill be taken?

- An emergency pill is most effective if taken 24-72 hours after unprotected sex, but may still be taken between 72 and 120 hours (Three to four days) later. However, the sooner it is taken, the more effective it will be.

3. How often do condoms fail?

- Compared to modern hormonal methods, condoms are less reliable and effective for the prevention of pregnancy, but are the only method that will protect you against STIs and HIV/AIDS. Dual protection is always encouraged to ensure effective protection.

4. Will an injectable contraceptive affect my menstrual cycle?

- Injectable contraceptives may cause bleeding and spotting between periods. Menstrual bleeding varying from slight staining between periods to breakthrough bleeding may occur during the first few months, but may also only occur after having used the injectable contraceptive for some time. It is important to continue using the injections on schedule. If the irregular bleeding or spotting is heavy or continues for five or more days, you should consult your doctor or health care provider.

5. How many injectable contraceptives can you have?

- If you are sexually active and do not currently wish to fall pregnant, you may continue having the injections indefinitely, provided that you have found a product that agrees with you and regularly visits your doctor or health care provider for check-ups.

6. What happens if I decide to have children? Will the injectable contraceptive affect my long-term fertility?

- After stopping the injections, periods and fertility may take between six months and a year to return, depending on the type of injectable used. This may, however, vary from person to person.

7. Can you fall pregnant while using the injectable contraceptive?

The contraceptive injection has a 94% efficacy, which means that 6 out of every 100 women using it will have an unplanned pregnancy.

8. I am taking antibiotic medication. Will this influence the effect of the pill?

- Since some antibiotics and other prescription drugs may reduce the effectiveness of the pill, you should always tell your doctor or health care provider that you are taking the pill if you need prescribed medication.

9. When do I start taking the pill?

- If you did not use any contraceptive with hormones during the previous month, you should start taking the pill on the first day of your period.

10. Is the Implanon procedure painful?

- Local anaesthesia is administered and there should be very little pain. The procedure takes only a few minutes. Slight bruising or soreness may be experienced afterwards. You are advised not to lift or carry heavy objects for two days after the insertion.

Compiled by Student Health Services

Hormonal method [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.your-life.com/en/contraception-methods/short-acting-contraception/the-pill/>. [Accessed 20 May 2020]