

Your Family Planning

Thinking about the future

Many new mothers (and fathers) tell us this is not the time to talk about family planning. Even so, your healthcare provider will still ask you about your plans for contraception (birth control) before you leave the hospital.

This chapter in your book is for when you are ready for sexual closeness again. Having a baby changes many things. Your new baby will affect your life and your plans for yourself and your family.

Think about what you want for yourself and your family. Find time to talk with your sexual partner or partners about the future. (*For convenience, we will refer to one sexual partner in this chapter.*)

As you read this chapter, think about:

- Your overall health
- Your age
- How often you have sex
- Your ideal family size
- Your partner's ideal family size
- Protection against the spread of sexually transmitted infections



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Birth Control Methods

You may hear about success rates for birth control methods – for example, “The condom prevents pregnancy 86% to 96% of the time.” This example tells us that condoms usually prevent pregnancies for 86 to 96 couples out of 100.

The lower number (86%) tells how successful 100 couples were the first year they used that method. The higher number (96%) is the expected success rates for 100 couples if they use the method perfectly.

This means that between 4 and 14 couples out of 100 will become pregnant if they use only condoms for birth control.



Talk with your partner about using 2 birth control methods at a time to increase your protection.

Using 2 birth control methods at a time **increases** your protection. If a couple combines 1 method that has a 95% pregnancy prevention rate per 100 couples with a 2nd method that has a prevention rate of 90% per 100 couples, their combined prevention rates is 99.5%. That's only **5 pregnancies among 1,000 couples** who used both birth control methods for 1 year.

Things to Think About

Here are some questions to consider as you think about planning your family.

Do you want to limit your family size or when your next child will be born?

There are different birth control methods to think about, depending on what you want. Stopping the growth of your family is different than controlling when your children are born.

Reversible Birth Control

Most birth control methods are “reversible.” When you stop using them, you return to your natural chances of becoming pregnant. Some reversible birth control methods are:

- Natural family planning methods
- Male and female condoms
- Spermicidal jelly
- Diaphragms
- Cervical caps
- Intrauterine device (IUD)
- “Morning after pill”
- Depo-Provera
- Oral contraceptives (the Pill)
- Contraceptive vaginal ring (NuvaRing)
- Transdermal contraceptive patch (Ortho Evra)
- Implants (Implanon/ Nexplanon)

Permanent Birth Control

Permanent methods require surgery:

- Women can get a *tubal ligation* or *trans-cervical tubal occlusion* (both of these prevent eggs from reaching the uterus).
- Men can get a *vasectomy*, which prevents sperm from being released during ejaculation.

These methods are very good at preventing pregnancy. Couples who choose permanent methods have decided they do not want any more children.



Talk with your healthcare provider about the best kind of birth control for you and your health.

Can you handle the side effects of birth control? What if a certain type makes you sick?

“Birth control” includes many ways to prevent pregnancy. The choice is **not** between a method that makes you sick and no method at all. Your healthcare provider can help you find a safe method that works for you and does not cause you too much discomfort.

Some birth control methods may not be safe if you take other medicines, herbs, or use “street” (illegal) drugs. Or, you may have a medical condition that makes some methods risky for you.

Birth control methods that contain estrogen (pills, patch, and vaginal ring) may decrease your breast milk. Once breastfeeding is well established, most women do not have a decrease in breast milk from estrogen-containing birth control. But, it is always safe to use progestin-only pills (also call mini-pills) when you are breastfeeding.

If you smoke or have high blood pressure, migraines, or a history of blood clots, let your healthcare provider know. It may not be healthy for you to use birth control that contains estrogen.

How easy is it for you to use the method of birth control you choose?

What is easy to use for one woman might be too involved for another. Some women find it easy to remember to take a birth control pill every day at the same time, but some do not. Some women are comfortable touching their bodies and can feel when a diaphragm is placed right, but for some women using a diaphragm is uncomfortable.

If a method (such as a condom) requires you do something while in the middle of having sex, will you be able to stop and do it? Will you be worried that it will affect your or your partner’s mood too much? Will your partner understand or try to persuade you to “skip it this time”?

You need to remember to use some methods often. For example:

- The Pill must be taken every day.
- Male or female condoms and spermicides must be used every time you have sex.

Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) needs less attention. Two types of LARC methods are:

- Intrauterine devices (IUDs), which work for 5 or 10 years, depending on which type you choose,
- Implants (Implanon/Nexplanon), which last for 3 years.

Do you need to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)?

When you are having sex, *continuous barrier methods* offer the best protection. These methods include the male and female condom. You may have better protection against STIs and HIV when these methods are used with some spermicides.

Whatever you choose as your preferred method of birth control, you will still have to use the male or female condom to protect yourself against STIs and HIV.



Half of all pregnancies in the United States occur in women who are using birth control.

Five Common Ways Birth Control “Fails”

Half of the unplanned pregnancies in this country occur in women who are using birth control! Birth control must be used *the right way, every time*.

Here are the 5 main reasons birth control fails, and what you can do about them:

1. Not following the instructions.

Carefully read the directions for your chosen birth control method and follow them, every time.

- Take the Pill at the same time every day.
- Make sure condoms have not expired and check to see that they are in good condition. After a man ejaculates, he should remove his penis from the vagina before it begins to shrink. Also, he should make sure he grips the condom against the base of his penis as he withdraws after sex so that the condom does not slip off.
- Make sure diaphragms or cervical caps cover your cervix.

2. Not being consistent.

Birth control must be used **every time** you have sex, unless you *want* to become pregnant.

- If you forget to take even one birth control pill, your chance of becoming pregnant increases.



Be sure both you and your partner know how to care for and use condoms.

- You **must** use spermicide with condoms, cervical caps, and diaphragms (barrier methods) **every time** for them to prevent pregnancy.

It takes having unprotected sex only one time to become pregnant. If you have any doubts you or your partner can be consistent, think about longer-lasting methods.

3. Not keeping the condom intact during sex.

- Condoms hold up during sex 95% to 98% of the time (95 to 98 times out of 100). This means that they break 2% to 5% of the time (2 to 5 times out of 100).
- Most condoms are made of latex rubber, which becomes weaker when it touches oil. Use only water-based lubricants and spermicides with condoms.
- **Always** use vaginal spermicides with condoms to help lower the risk of pregnancy, in case the condom breaks during use.
- Make sure fingernails, jewelry, and other objects do not make any tears in a condom. Sperm can pass through even a tiny tear or hole.
- **Do not use a condom if it is past the expiration date on the label.** Latex rubber will crack and get brittle over time.
- **If a condom breaks, or you cannot use one during sex for any reason, you can get emergency contraception at your pharmacy or from your healthcare provider.** This type of contraception prevents pregnancy if you take it within 5 days of having unprotected sex.

4. Not knowing how the Pill interacts with other medicines or herbs.

- Tell your healthcare provider about other drugs or herbs you are taking. For example, some antibiotics can interfere with combination oral contraceptive pills.
- If you take antibiotics, check with your healthcare provider about when you should stop taking the Pill, when it is safe to start taking it again, or if you need to use a back-up method. Use another birth control method or do not have sex during the time you are not taking the Pill.

5. Not knowing the truth about how to prevent pregnancy

There are many ideas about how to prevent pregnancy. Some of them are not true.

These statements **are true**:

- Usually the time during your period is a safe time to have sexual intercourse, but some women **can** still get pregnant during this time.
- Urinating after sexual intercourse does **not** prevent pregnancy. It can help prevent urinary tract infections.
- Douching (rinsing your vagina), powders, deodorants and other feminine hygiene products do **not** prevent pregnancy, and they have no health benefit.
- Unprotected sex “just one time” **can** get you pregnant.
- You do **not** need to have an orgasm to become pregnant.
- You are **not** too old to get pregnant, unless you have gone through menopause (natural or surgical).
- You are **not** too young to get pregnant, unless you have not yet entered puberty. A girl can get pregnant before she starts menstruating.
- You **can** get pregnant while breastfeeding.

Choosing When to Have Children

When you make choices based on the facts, you increase your chances of having the number of children you want in your family when you want to have them. The bothers of using birth control the right way every time are small, compared to the decisions that follow an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy.

If you would like to read about the many methods of birth control, ask your healthcare provider for a brochure called “Birth Control – Choosing the Method That’s Right for You” by the State of Washington Department of Health. Or, call 800.525.0127 to ask for a copy.

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about family planning, ask your healthcare provider at your next visit or while you are in the hospital.