

Birth Control Method Options



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Clients considering their birth control method options should understand the range and characteristics of available methods. Providers can use this chart to help explain the options. Clients should also be counseled about the benefits of delaying sexual activity and reducing risk of STDs by limiting the number of partners and consistently using condoms.

MOST EFFECTIVE
EFFECTIVE
MODERATELY EFFECTIVE
LEAST EFFECTIVE

METHOD	What is the risk for pregnancy?*	How do you use this method?	How often is this used?	What are menstrual side effects?	Are there possible side effects?	Other things to consider?	
FEMALE STERILIZATION 	.5 out of 100	Surgical procedure	Once	No menstrual side effects	Pain, bleeding, risk of infection	Permanent	
MALE STERILIZATION 	.15 out of 100						
LNG IUD 	.2 out of 100	Placed inside uterus	Up to 6 years	Spotting, lighter or no periods	Some pain with placement	No estrogen May reduce cramps	
COPPER IUD 	.8 out of 100		Up to 10 years	May cause heavier periods		No hormones May cause cramps	
IMPLANT 	.05 out of 100		Placed in upper arm	Up to 3 years		Spotting, lighter or no periods	No estrogen May reduce cramps
INJECTABLES 	4 out of 100	Shot in arm, hip, or under the skin	Every 3 months	Spotting, lighter or no periods	May cause weight gain	No estrogen May reduce cramps	
PILL 	8 out of 100	Take by mouth	Every day at the same time	Can cause spotting for the first few months Periods may become lighter	Nausea, breast tenderness Risk for VTE (venous thromboembolism)	May improve acne	
PATCH 	9 out of 100	Put on skin	Weekly			May reduce menstrual cramps	
RING 	9 out of 100	Put in vagina	Monthly			Lowers ovarian and uterine cancer risk	
DIAPHRAGM 	12 out of 100	Put in vagina with spermicide	Every time you have sex	No menstrual side effects	Allergic reaction, irritation	No hormones	
MALE CONDOM 	13 out of 100	Put over penis	Every time you have sex	No menstrual side effects	Allergic reaction, irritation	No hormones No prescription	
WITHDRAWAL 	20 out of 100	Pull penis out of vagina before ejaculation			No side effects	No hormones Nothing to buy	
FEMALE CONDOM 	21 out of 100	Put inside vagina			Allergic reaction, irritation	No hormones No prescription	
SPONGE 	24 out of 100	Put inside vagina			No side effects	No hormones Increased awareness of fertility signs	
FERTILITY AWARENESS-BASED METHODS 	24 out of 100	Monitor fertility signs and abstain or use condoms on fertile days			Every day	Allergic reaction, irritation	No hormones No prescription
SPERMICIDES 	28 out of 100	Put inside vagina			Every time you have sex	Allergic reaction, irritation	No hormones No prescription

*The number of women out of every 100 who have an unintended pregnancy within the first year of typical use of each method. Other methods of birth control: (1) Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) is a highly effective, temporary method of contraception; and (2) Emergency Contraception: emergency contraceptive pills or a copper IUD after unprotected intercourse substantially reduces risk of pregnancy. Reference for effectiveness rates: Trussell J. Contraceptive failure in the United States. *Contraception* 2011; 83: 397-404. Sundaram A. Contraceptive failure in the United States. *Perspect Sex Reprod Health* 2017; 49:7-16. Other references available on www.fpntc.org.