

BIRTH CONTROL

You have many options when it comes to birth control! Some last for a short time, others for years. Some are very effective while others are effective only if they are used the right way. Each has pros and cons. Take a look below and see if you find one that might be a good fit for you.

Which option is right for me?

COPPER IUD

A copper intrauterine device (IUD) is a small T-shaped object that a health care provider puts into your uterus. The IUD makes it so that sperm cannot reach the egg. Copper IUDs can also be inserted up to 5 days after unprotected sex as emergency contraception.

Pros

It works for a long time, and you don't have to remember to take a medicine daily.

Cons

Side effects may include more cramping and heavier periods.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.9%
typical use 99.2%

how long can it be used?

10-12 years

typical total cost* (how much is that per month?)

\$1,000 (\$8 per month)

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

PROGESTIN IUD

A progestin IUD is a small T-shaped object that a health care provider puts into your uterus. It releases a small amount of the hormone progesterone each day that keeps the egg from being released or the sperm from joining the egg.

Pros

It works for a long time, and you don't have to remember to take a medicine daily. It can reduce cramps you get with your period and make periods lighter.

Cons

Side effects may include cramps or discomfort during the first few days or spotting during the first few months.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.9%
typical use 99.8%

how long can it be used?

3-5 years

typical total cost* (how much is that per month?)

\$1,000 (\$28 per month)

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the IMPLANT

The implant is a small plastic rod that a health care provider inserts under the skin of your upper arm. It releases the hormone progesterone. This prevents eggs from being released to the uterus and also makes it harder for sperm reach the egg.

Pros

Many women stop getting their period a year after the Implant is put in. It works for a long time, and you don't need to remember to take a medicine daily.

Cons

Some women experience irregular bleeding.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.9%

how long can it be used?

up to 3 years

typical total cost* (how much is that per month?)

\$800 (\$22 per month)

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the SHOT

Your health care provider can give you an injection containing progesterone, which prevents eggs from being released.

Pros

Some women stop getting their period. It also works for 3 months so you don't have to remember to take medicine daily. It is a very discreet method as it has no packaging or signs that you used it.

Cons

Some women experience spotting or weight gain. Side effects can sometimes last up to 6 months after the last injection.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.9%
typical use 94%

how often do you have to get it?

every 3 months

typical total cost* (how much is that per month?)

\$100 (\$33 per month)

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the PILL

Pills can be prescribed by your health care provider and must be taken at the same time everyday. They contain the progesterone and sometimes estrogen, which prevent eggs from being released.

Pros

Some brands can make your periods more regular and less painful.

Cons

Side effects may include spotting during the first few months of use or changes in your sex drive. You must also remember to take it daily.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.7%
typical use 91%

how often do you have to take it?

every day at the same time

typical cost*

\$30-50 per month

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the PATCH

Patches are prescribed by a health care provider and stick to your skin. Your skin slowly absorbs progesterone and estrogen, which prevent eggs from being released.

Pros

You don't need to remember to use it as often as the pill. It can help make your periods more regular and less painful.

Cons

Some women experience spotting in the first 1-2 months or skin irritation where they stick the patch.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.7%
typical use 91%

how often do you use it?

a new patch each week for 3 weeks, followed by 1 week with no patch

typical cost*

\$80 per month

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the RING

This is a small ring made of vinyl acetate that is inserted in your vagina. It releases progesterone and estrogen to prevent eggs from being released.

Pros

You don't need to remember to use it as often as the pill. It can help make your periods more regular and less painful.

Cons

Side effects may include vaginal discharge and spotting in the first 1-2 months.

effectiveness

perfect use 99.7%
typical use 91%

how often do you use it?

a new ring for 3 weeks, followed by 1 week with no ring

typical cost*

\$80 per month

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the DIAPHRAGM

The diaphragm is a silicone cup that is made to fit inside your vagina. You use it with spermicide and put it in every time you have sex. It blocks the sperm from reaching the egg.

Pros

It can be washed and reused up to two years. It does not affect your hormones.

Cons

It may be difficult for some women to insert and can move out of place during sex. Silicone and spermicide can cause vaginal irritation, which increases the risk of HIV and STIs.

effectiveness

perfect use 94%
typical use 88%

how often do you use it?

every time before sex

typical total cost* (how much is that per month?)

\$75 (\$3 per month)

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the CERVICAL CAP

The cervical cap is a silicone cup that is made to fit inside your vagina. You use it with spermicide put it in every time you have sex. It blocks the sperm from reaching the egg. It is similar to a diaphragm, but smaller.

Pros

It can be washed and reused for up to two years. It does not affect your hormones.

Cons

It can't be used when on your period. It may be difficult to insert and can move out of place during sex. It is not as effective as other methods. Spermicide may cause vaginal irritation, which increases the risk for HIV and STIs.

effectiveness for women who have never given birth

perfect use 90.5%
typical use 79.5%

how often do you use it?

every time before sex

typical total cost* (how much is that per month?)

\$75 (\$3 per month)

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

the SPONGE

The sponge is a 2-inch circle made of soft plastic foam, with a loop attached to the bottom. It contains spermicide and is inserted into the vagina before sex. It covers the cervix to keep sperm from the egg.

Pros

It is a cost-effective method that can be bought at a store without a prescription. It does not affect your hormones.

Cons

It may be messy to insert or difficult to remove. Spermicide may cause irritation or increase risk for HIV and STIs.

effectiveness for women who have never given birth

perfect use 91%
typical use 88%

how often do you use it?

every time before sex

typical cost*

\$15 for a pack of 3 sponges

protection against HIV/STIs?

no

Image from the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research

Sources: Planned Parenthood; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Images used under license from Shutterstock.com and iStockPhoto.com

***These are the typical costs without health insurance.**

Many options are covered by health insurance and may be cheaper, if you want to include your insurance on your decision. Costs vary by state.

Learn more about our research:
InnovativePublicHealth.org