

Understanding Today's Birth Control Choices



STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

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Your Choice Matters.

We at Student Health Services would like to inform you of your choices for birth control.

The following chart reviews the major methods for birth control; hormonal, barrier, and spermicidal.

If you have any questions or concerns please call 619.594.5934 to speak with an Advice Nurse, or call 619.594.4133 to speak with a Health Educator. You can also make an appointment to speak with a provider (i.e. nurse, nurse practitioner, or doctor) by calling 619.594.4736.



Summary of Contraceptive Methods

BIRTH CONTROL METHOD	How To Use It	How It Works	Approximate Effectiveness Rate (Perfect Use*)	Approximate Effectiveness Rate (Typical Use**)	Length of Effectiveness	Provides Protection From	Side Effects	Pros	Cons
Spermicidal Methods									
Contraceptive Foam/Cream/Jelly	Inserted into the vagina with a tampon-like applicator.	Spermicide kills sperm on contact.	82%	71%	One act of intercourse or once per hour.	No	Possible allergic reaction/irritation.	Non-prescription, easy to use, little to no side effects.	Must be used immediately before intercourse.
Contraceptive Suppositories/Film	Inserted into the vagina with fingers.	After melting, spermicide kills sperm on contact.	82%	71%	One suppository or piece of film per act of intercourse or per hour.	No	Possible allergic reaction/irritation.	Non-prescription, easy to use, little to no side effects.	Must wait 15-20 minutes after insertion before becoming effective.
Barrier Methods									
Diaphragm	With cream or jelly, it is inserted into vagina with fingers.	Spermicidal jelly kills sperm on contact. Rubber diaphragm also acts as barrier.	94%	84%	Jelly: 4-6 hours. Can be left in for up to 24 hours.	No	Some women may experience urinary tract infections.	Can be inserted up to 5 hours before intercourse.	Prescription required, must be fitted by medical provider. If used without spermicide, effectiveness
Female Condom (Reality)	Inserted into vagina with fingers.	Creates a barrier.	95%	79%	Condom is only effective for a single act of intercourse.	Yes (Most)	Possible allergic reaction	Non-prescription, provides protection from most STDs, including protection of outer vaginal area.	Insertion requires comfort with body. Must be used immediately before contact with partner's
Male Latex Condom	Rolled onto erect penis prior to intercourse.	Creates a barrier.	98%	85%	Condom is only effective for a single act of intercourse.	Yes (Most)	Possible allergic reaction.	Non-prescription, provides protection from STDs.	Must be used immediately before contact with partner's genitals.
Hormonal Methods									
Birth Control Pill	Taken orally once every day.	Suppresses ovulation, inhibits uterine lining buildup, thickens cervical mucous.	99.7%	92%	If taken as directed, consistent protection from pregnancy	No	Vary based on individual risk factors.	Provides constant protection, regardless of frequency and/or timing of sexual intercourse. Over time, increased protection from certain reproductive cancers.	Prescription required, eligibility determined by medical provider. Some women may experience severe side effects.
Depo-Provera (The Shot)	Injection administered every 3 months by a medical provider.	Suppresses ovulation, inhibits uterine lining buildup, thickens	99.7%	97%	If injections occur on schedule, consistent protection from pregnancy is provided.	No	Vary based on individual risk factors. Irregular or cessation of menstrual cycle will occur.	Provides constant protection, regardless of frequency and/or timing of sexual intercourse.	Prescription required, eligibility determined by medical provider. Some women may experience severe side effects.
Ortho Evra (The Patch)	Patch is applied to the skin once a week for 3 weeks. 4th week is	Suppresses ovulation, inhibits uterine lining buildup, thickens cervical mucous.	99.7%	92%	If patch is applied on schedule, consistent protection provided.	No	Varies based on individual risk factors.	Provides constant protection, regardless of frequency and/or timing of sexual intercourse.	Prescription required, eligibility determined by medical provider. Some women may experience severe side effects.
Nuva Ring	Insert ring into vagina & leave it in place for 3 weeks. Remove for the 4th week	Suppresses ovulation, inhibits uterine lining buildup, thickens cervical mucous.	99.7%	92%	If ring is inserted properly, consistent protection provided.	No	Varies based on individual risk factors.	Provides constant protection, regardless of frequency and/or timing of sexual intercourse. Once a month vs. daily regimen.	Prescription required, eligibility determined by medical provider. Some women may experience severe side effects.
Other Methods									
Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP)	Pill taken up to five days after unprotected intercourse.	Suppresses ovulation, inhibits uterine lining buildup, thickens	≥75% if taken within 72 hours after unprotected	Becomes less effective the longer you wait to take ECP	It is only effective for a single act of intercourse.	No	Nausea and throwing up are the most common side effects	Non-prescription, easy to use, little to no side effects.	Should not be used as a form of ongoing birth control because it is less effective. Some women may experience minor side effects.
IUD	A health care provider inserts the IUD into a woman's uterus	Affects the way sperm move, preventing them from joining with an egg.	99.8%	99.8%	If inserted properly, consistent protection provided.	No	In rare situations, a woman could develop an infection.	Provides constant protection, regardless of frequency and/or timing of sexual intercourse. Once every five years vs. daily regimen.	Prescription required, eligibility determined by medical provider. Some women may experience severe side effects.
Norplant	Capsules are inserted by a health care provider in a superficial plane beneath the skin of the upper arm.	Suppresses ovulation, inhibits uterine lining buildup, thickens cervical mucous.	99.95%	99.95%	If inserted properly, consistent protection provided.	No	Varies based on individual risk factors.	Provides constant protection, regardless of frequency and/or timing of sexual intercourse. Once every five years vs. daily regimen.	Prescription required, eligibility determined by medical provider. Some women may experience severe side effects.

* Perfect Use—Effectiveness of contraceptives when used *consistently* and *correctly* according to instructions.

** Typical Use—Effectiveness of contraceptives when used by the average person who does not always use methods *correctly* and *consistently*.