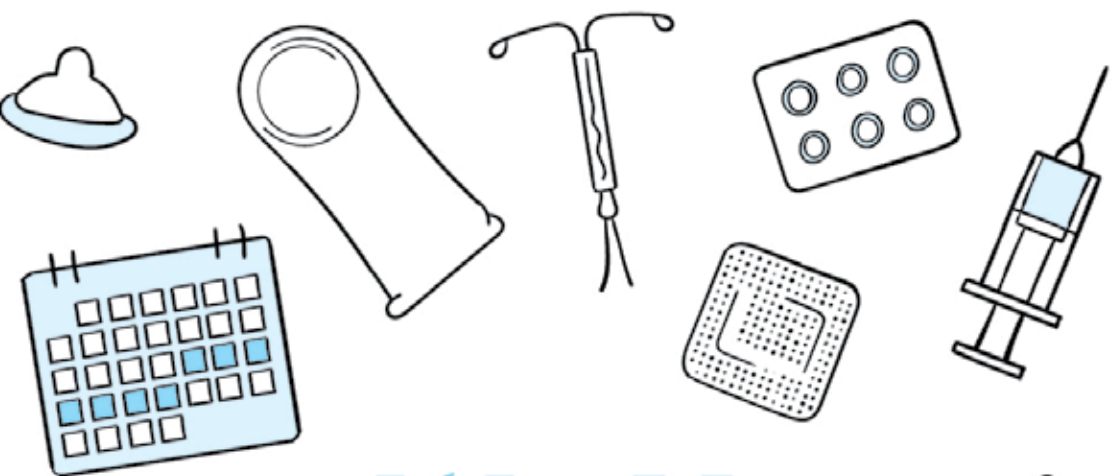
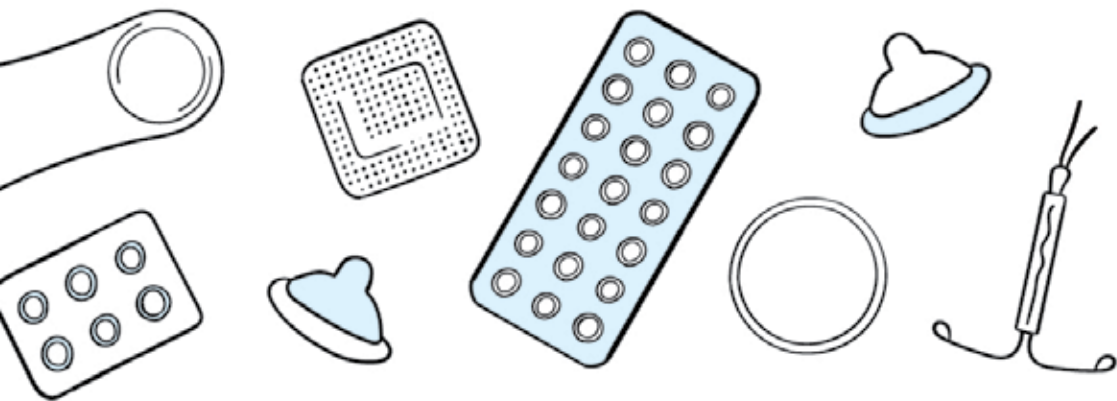




It's Your Choice

birth control



Centre for Sexuality



We teach, we train and we advocate to support healthy bodies, healthy relationships and healthy communities.

CENTRE FOR SEXUALITY OFFERS FREE:

- Supportive counselling in the areas of sexuality and sexual health, including: relationship counselling, pregnancy options, post-abortion support, gender identity and sexual orientation
- Birth control information and decision-making support
- Pregnancy tests
- Condoms
- Support with how to ask your doctor questions and how to get the birth control of your choice

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This booklet contains general information only. It is not to be used for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. It is not meant to replace a consultation with a healthcare professional.

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INTRODUCTION

Birth control: It's your choice!

Everyone deserves information about safer sex. Knowing all the options and how they work can help someone make the best choice for themselves.

There are a lot of birth control options available and there is no one “best choice” that will work for everyone. You have the right to decide what is best for you based on your needs and values.

Birth control can be grouped into three categories:

- Hormonal birth control changes levels of hormones in the body for people with ovaries to reduce the chance of pregnancy.
- Non-hormonal birth control uses barriers and other tools to prevent pregnancy by stopping sperm from entering the uterus.
- Permanent birth control methods like vasectomies and tubal ligations are surgical procedures.

As you read through this booklet, here are some questions to think about to help you make your decision:

- Does this type of birth control fit my needs, schedule and lifestyle?
- Does this type of birth control fit with my values and beliefs?
- Would I use this type of birth control, or would my partner be using it?
- Could this type of birth control change my body? Is that okay with me?
- Do I want birth control to also protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?
- What other information do I need before I make my choice?

Once you know what type of birth control you are interested in, you can go to your doctor for a prescription if you need to.

If you are nervous about talking to a doctor about birth control, here are some tips:

- Do research on the types of birth control you are interested in.
- Bring a list of questions you want to ask.
- Bring this booklet and ask questions about the types of birth control in it.
- Find out what types of birth control also protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

- Ask about the cost of birth control that you are interested in.
- If the doctor says something you do not understand, ask them to explain.
- Ask for the type of birth control you want. If the doctor is not willing to provide you with the birth control that you want, you can always talk to a different doctor.
- If you are a minor, ask who will be able to view your health records and prescription information.

Consent

Consent is an agreement (yes) from everyone involved that they want to have sex. A yes shows that there is comfort with what is happening.

There are many reasons someone might use birth control that are not about preventing pregnancy. Using birth control is not only for people having sex and it does not mean someone has had or wants to have sex.

If you have more questions...

If you have more questions, Centre for Sexuality offers free birth control information and decision-making support. You can call us, email us or use the “Have a sexual health question?” button on our website to confidentially ask our staff any questions you have.

Note: To be inclusive of trans and intersex people, this resource avoids gendering birth control users and instead uses “person with a penis,” “person with ovaries,” “person with a vulva/vagina,” etc.

HORMONAL METHODS

THE PILL (COMBINATION PILL) **92% - 99.9% EFFECTIVE**

The combination pill only works in the body of a person with ovaries.

It uses the hormones estrogen and progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

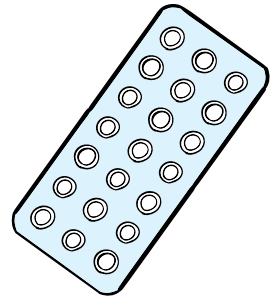
- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- Take a pill once a day, at the same time each day.
- If a pill is forgotten or taken late then a back-up method, like condoms, is needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I remember to take the pill every day at the same time?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It may make periods more regular, lighter and less painful.
- It can be used safely for many years.
- A person over 35 who smokes should not use it.
- It may not work well with other medication.
- It may cause bleeding, spotting, nausea, bloating, breast tenderness, headaches and/or blood clots.
- There is a higher risk of pregnancy if the pill is not taken at the same time every day.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

HORMONAL METHODS

THE PILL (MINI PILL) **90% - 99% EFFECTIVE**

The mini pill only works in the body of a person with ovaries.

It uses the hormone progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

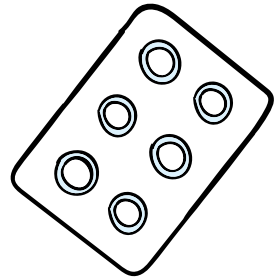
- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- Take a pill once a day, at the same time each day.
- If a pill is forgotten or taken late then a back-up method, like condoms, is needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I remember to take the pill every day at the same time?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It may make periods more regular, lighter and less painful.
- It can be used safely for many years.
- A person over 35 who smokes should not use it.
- It may not work well with other medication.
- It may cause bleeding, spotting, nausea, bloating, breast tenderness, headaches and/or blood clots.
- There is a higher risk of pregnancy if the pill is not taken at the same time every day.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

HORMONAL METHODS

THE PATCH (Evra®)
92% - 99.9% EFFECTIVE

The patch only works in the body of a person with ovaries. Hormones enter the body through the skin.

It uses the hormones estrogen and progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

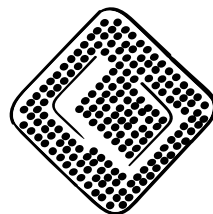
- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- A new patch is put on the skin once a week for three weeks in a row.
- On the fourth week, no patch is put on. This is when a period will happen.
- If a patch is not changed on time then a back-up method, like condoms, is needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I remember to change the patch once a week?
- Am I comfortable wearing the patch on my skin where it may be seen?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It may make periods more regular, lighter and less painful.
- It can be used safely for many years.
- A person over 35 who smokes should not use it.
- It may not work well with other medication.
- It can cause bleeding, spotting, nausea, bloating, breast tenderness, headaches and/or blood clots.
- It may cause skin irritation.
- It may fall off.
- It may not work for people heavier than 198 lbs (90 kg).
- It may not match a person's skin tone.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

The ring only works in the body of a person with ovaries. Hormones slowly get into the body through the vagina. It uses the hormones estrogen and progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

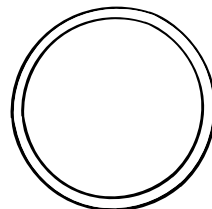
- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- The soft ring is put in the vagina for three weeks. At the beginning of the fourth week, the ring is taken out. This is when a period will happen.
- If the ring is not changed on time then a back-up method, like condoms, is needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I remember to insert and remove the ring monthly?
- Am I comfortable inserting the ring into my vagina?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It must be stored in the refrigerator before use.
- It may make periods more regular, lighter and less painful.
- It can be used safely for many years.
- A person over 35 who smokes should not use it.
- It may not work well with other medication.
- It can cause bleeding, spotting, nausea, bloating, breast tenderness, headaches and/or blood clots.
- It may cause discomfort or irritation in the vagina.
- It may fall out of the vagina.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

HORMONAL METHODS

CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT (Nexplanon®) UP TO 99.9% EFFECTIVE

The contraceptive implant only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It uses the hormone progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- A doctor puts a soft matchstick-sized implant under the skin of the arm.
- It cannot be seen under the arm, but can be felt.
- It can be left in place for up to three years.
- A doctor must take it out.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- How do I feel about having something implanted under my skin?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It can be used with other forms of birth control.
- It may make periods more regular, lighter and less painful. It may stop periods.
- It may cause spotting and bleeding in the first few months. This often improves over time.
- It can be used for three years but must be taken out at the end of the third year.
- Pain relief can be provided to make insertion more comfortable.
- It may not work well with other medication.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

HORMONAL METHODS

HORMONAL IUD (Mirena[®], Kyleena[®]) **98.5% - 99.9% EFFECTIVE**

A hormonal intrauterine device (IUD) only works in the body of a person with ovaries.

It uses the hormone progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

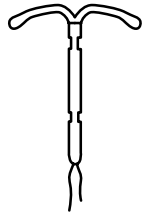
- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- A doctor puts a small, soft T-shaped device into the uterus through the cervix.
- Depending on the brand, it can be left in place for up to eight years.
- An IUD has strings that can be felt by inserting a finger into the vagina. This helps ensure that the IUD is still in place.
- A doctor must take it out.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- How do I feel about having an IUD inside my uterus?
- Am I comfortable checking my IUD strings each month?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It may make periods more regular, lighter and less painful. It may stop periods.
- It may cause bleeding, spotting and/or cramping.
- It can be used safely for many years.
- It may fall out.
- It can be used when breastfeeding.
- Pain relief may be available to make insertion more comfortable.
- There is a higher risk of pelvic inflammatory disease if a person gets an STI while using an IUD.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

The shot only works in the body of a person with ovaries.

It uses the hormone progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each cycle

HOW TO USE IT:

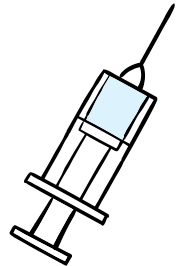
- Visit a doctor to get a prescription.
- A nurse or doctor gives an injection in the arm or buttocks every three months.
- If the shot is not given on time then a back-up method, like condoms, is needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I go to the doctor every three months for the shot?
- How do I feel about needles?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It may stop periods.
- It can only be used for two years at a time.
- A person over 35 who smokes should not use it.
- It can be used when breastfeeding.
- Irregular bleeding is common during the first few months.
- It may cause weight gain, depression, changes in sex drive and/or hair loss.
- It may take several months to get pregnant after shots are stopped.
- A person may need to take calcium and vitamin D while using this type of birth control.



Hormonal birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider also using condoms to protect against STIs and for added protection against pregnancy.

All hormonal birth control methods have health risks and benefits. A doctor can help you find the best method for you.

EMERGENCY METHODS

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL (Plan B®) UP TO 95% EFFECTIVE

Plan B® only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It uses a high dose of the hormone progestin to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm can't enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg

Plan B® is not an abortion pill. If a person is already pregnant, emergency contraception won't work.

HOW TO USE IT:

- This pill is most effective when taken in the first 24 hours after unprotected sex, but it can be taken up to 72 hours after.
- It can be used after sex if a condom breaks, if a birth control method has failed or if someone did not use birth control.
- It is available at drug stores, pharmacies or at AHS Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinics. No prescription is needed, but it is sometimes kept behind the pharmacy counter.
- Read the instructions before use to make sure you take it correctly.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I comfortable talking to a pharmacist or doctor about this type of emergency birth control?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- No prescription is required.
- It can be used with other forms of birth control.
- It may be less effective in people heavier than 155 pounds (70.3 kg).
- It can cause bleeding, spotting, breast tenderness, headaches, cramps and/or nausea.
- It is not meant to be used as ongoing birth control.
- It can be stored long-term. Consider buying some in advance to have on hand at home in case you need it.



Emergency birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider getting tested for STIs if you have had unprotected sex.

Copper IUDs can also be used as emergency contraception. See page 14 for details.

EMERGENCY METHODS

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL (Ella®) UP TO 85% EFFECTIVE

Ella® only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It changes the level of progesterone in the body in order to:

- make cervical mucus thicker so sperm cannot enter the uterus
- change the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- stop the ovaries from releasing an egg

Ella® is not an abortion pill. If a person is already pregnant, emergency contraception won't work.

HOW TO USE IT:

- Take the pill after unprotected sex. It can be taken up to five days after unprotected sex and its effectiveness stays the same up to the fifth day.
- It can be used after sex if a condom breaks, if a birth control method has failed or if someone did not use birth control.
- This type of pill requires a doctor's prescription.
- Read the instructions before use to make sure you take it correctly.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I comfortable talking to a pharmacist or doctor about this type of emergency birth control?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A prescription is required.
- It should not be used if hormonal contraception or emergency contraception have been used in the last seven days.
- It can cause bleeding, spotting, breast tenderness, headaches, cramps and/or nausea.
- It is not meant to be used as ongoing birth control.
- It may be less effective in people heavier than 195 pounds.
- It can be used while breastfeeding, but breast milk should be discarded for 24 hours after use.



Emergency birth control does not protect against STIs. Consider getting tested for STIs if you have had unprotected sex.

Copper IUDs can also be used as emergency contraception. See page 14 for details.

NON-HORMONAL METHODS

EXTERNAL CONDOM
85% - 98% EFFECTIVE

External condoms only work on the body of a person with a penis. It is a thin, strong cover for the penis that stops sperm from entering the uterus.

Condoms are most often made of latex, but other materials are available.

Do not use more than one condom at a time. "Doubling up," whether with two external condoms or with an external and internal condom, lowers effectiveness.

HOW TO USE IT:

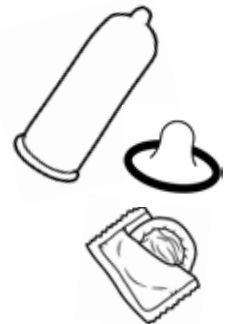
- Condoms can be purchased at grocery stores, drug stores, pharmacies and online, or get them for free at Centre for Sexuality, the Alex Health Centre and AHS Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinics.
- Before using a condom, check the expiry date and read the directions to understand how to use it.
- Once the penis is hard, pinch the tip of the condom so there is no air pocket in the tip, then roll the condom down to the base of the penis.
- A condom can only be used once, even if no one ejaculates.
- After sex, hold the base of the condom when removing the penis from a partner's body so that sperm stays inside the condom.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I remember to check the expiry date?
- Do I have a safe place to store a condom?
- Am I comfortable talking to my partner about using condoms?
- Am I comfortable putting a condom on my penis?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- No prescription is required.
- It can be used with other forms of birth control.
- It must be stored at room temperature and handled with care.
- Condoms expire.
- It may slip off or break.
- It may lower sensations for either partner.
- It may make sex last longer.
- Oil-based lubricant will break a latex condom. It is best to use water-based lubricants.
- It lowers the chances of getting or transmitting STIs.



NON-HORMONAL METHODS

INTERNAL CONDOM 80% - 95% EFFECTIVE

Internal condoms only work in the body of a person with ovaries.

An internal condom is a thin, strong cover for the vagina that stops sperm from entering the uterus.

Do not use more than one condom at a time. "Doubling up," whether with two internal condoms or with an external and internal condom, lowers effectiveness.

HOW TO USE IT:

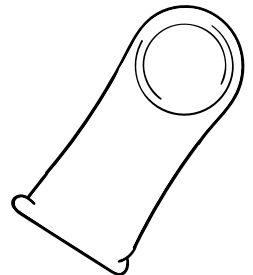
- Internal condoms can be harder to find than external condoms, but they are available for free at Centre for Sexuality, the Alex Health Centre and AHS Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinics.
- Before using an internal condom, read the directions to understand how to use it correctly.
- Pinch the internal ring and place the closed end inside the vagina.
- Let the outer ring rest on the outside of the vagina.
- A condom can only be used once, even if no one ejaculates.
- After sex, twist the outer ring to close the condom, then remove it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I remember to check the expiry date?
- Do I have a safe place to store a condom?
- Am I comfortable talking to my partner about using condoms?
- Am I comfortable inserting a condom into my vagina?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- No prescription is required.
- It can be used with other forms of birth control.
- It can be put in the vagina several hours before sex.
- It may slip out or break.
- It may lower sensations for either partner.
- Most internal condoms are non-latex, which are safe for those with latex allergies and can be used with oil-based lubricants.
- It lowers the chance of getting or transmitting STIs.



NON-HORMONAL METHODS

COPPER IUD (Paragard®)
99.2% - 99.4% EFFECTIVE

A copper intrauterine device (IUD) only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It is a small T-shaped device wrapped in copper wire that sits inside the uterus. The copper wire:

- changes the lining of the uterus so an egg cannot attach
- makes vaginal mucus thicker so sperm cannot get to the uterus

HOW TO USE IT:

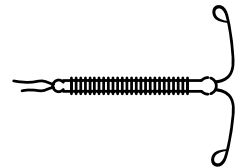
- A doctor puts a small, soft T-shaped device wrapped in copper wire into the uterus through the cervix.
- It can be left in place for up to 12 years.
- A doctor must take it out.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- How do I feel about having an IUD inside my uterus?
- Am I comfortable checking my IUD strings once a month?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- A doctor's visit is required for insertion.
- It may cause irregular periods, bleeding, spotting and/or cramping.
- It may lower the chance of getting cancer of the endometrium (inner lining of the uterus).
- A person can become pregnant right after it is removed.
- It may fall out.
- There is a higher risk of pelvic inflammatory disease if a person gets an STI while using an IUD.
- It does not protect against STIs.
- A copper IUD can be used as emergency contraception. It lowers chances of pregnancy by more than 99% if inserted within five days of unprotected sex. Be sure to specify when speaking to healthcare providers or when making an appointment if it is for emergency contraception.



OTHER NON-HORMONAL METHODS

ABSTINENCE (NOT HAVING SEX)

UP TO 100% EFFECTIVE

A person does not have sex. If sperm does not get on the vulva or inside the vagina, there is a lower risk of pregnancy.

HOW TO USE IT:

- Take the time to consider fully what abstaining will mean.
- Decide with a partner which sexual activities, if any, are okay. Avoid activities where semen touches the vulva or vagina.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I talk to my partner about abstinence and which sexual activities, if any, are okay?

- If my partner is pressuring me to have sex, do I know who to talk to?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- People can abstain from sex at any time.
- Without support from a partner or friends, it can be hard to stick with the decision to abstain.
- It is important to know about other types of birth control for the future.

WITHDRAWAL (PULLING OUT)

73% - 96% EFFECTIVE

If sperm does not get on the vulva or inside the vagina, there is a lower risk of pregnancy. Partners talk about using this method and agree to work together.

HOW TO USE IT:

- The penis is taken out of the vagina before ejaculation.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I comfortable talking to my partner about pulling out?
- Am I comfortable masturbating to practice pulling out?
- Can I pull out during sex?

- A person can practice controlling the timing of ejaculation by masturbating.
- Ejaculation can happen unexpectedly.
- There can be sperm in pre-ejaculate (pre-cum).
- Partners need to communicate about how this method will work for them and how they will use it.
- It does not protect against STIs.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- It works best when used with other forms of birth control.

OTHER NON-HORMONAL METHODS

THE SPONGE

68% - 90% EFFECTIVE

The sponge only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It is filled with spermicide (Nonoxynol-9) to numb sperm so they can't move. It also blocks and absorbs sperm.

HOW TO USE IT:

- Can be found at drug stores, pharmacies and online.
- Before sex, the sponge is placed in the vagina against the cervix.
- It must be left in the vagina for at least six hours after sex.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I insert and remove the sponge according to the directions?
- Am I comfortable inserting the sponge into my vagina?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- It works best when used with another form of birth control.
- No prescription is required.
- It can be used when breastfeeding.
- Some people may have an allergic reaction that can infect or irritate the penis or vagina. A reaction can increase the chance of getting an STI.
- Toxic Shock Syndrome may occur if the sponge is left in the vagina longer than recommended.
- It does not protect against STIs.

SPERMICIDE

71% - 82% EFFECTIVE

Spermicide only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It uses the chemical Nonoxynol-9 to numb sperm so they can't move.

HOW TO USE IT:

- Can be found at drug stores, pharmacies and online.
- The spermicide is put into the vagina before sex.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I use spermicide according to the package directions?
- Am I comfortable inserting spermicide into my vagina?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- It works best when used with another form of birth control.
- No prescription is required.
- It can be used when breastfeeding.
- Some people may have an allergic reaction that can irritate the penis or vagina. A reaction can increase the chance of getting an STI.
- It does not protect against STIs.

OTHER NON-HORMONAL METHODS

DIAPHRAGM (Caya®)

85% - 94% EFFECTIVE

A diaphragm only works in the body of a person with ovaries. It blocks the cervix so sperm cannot get in and fertilize an egg. The gel stops sperm from entering the uterus.

HOW TO USE IT:

- Can be found at drug stores, pharmacies and online.
- Before sex, place the diaphragm over the top of the cervix. It must be used with the Caya® Contraceptive Gel.
- It must be left in the vagina for 6 to 8 hours after sex.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I use the diaphragm as outlined in the package directions?

- Am I comfortable inserting the diaphragm into my vagina?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- It works best when used with another form of birth control.
- No prescription is required.
- It can be used when breastfeeding.
- It can be put in the vagina several hours before sex.
- It is reusable for up to two years.
- It does not protect against STIs.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

(Fertility Awareness, Justisse, Billings, Creighton)

75% - 99.6% EFFECTIVE

It can only be used in the body of a person with ovaries. A person charts their cycle to avoid pregnancy.

HOW TO USE IT:

- Information is available through AHS or other medical websites.
- A person charts their cycle to know when pregnancy is likely and abstains from sex or uses a backup method on days that a pregnancy may happen.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Can I chart every day?
- Am I comfortable checking my cervical mucus and taking my body

temperature?

- Can I abstain or use a backup method on days that a pregnancy may happen?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- It can help a person know their body and cycle.
- It takes time to understand when pregnancy is likely.
- It does not protect against STIs.
- Someone with an irregular cycle may find ovulation difficult to track.

PERMANENT METHODS

TUBAL LIGATION (Surgery)

99.5% EFFECTIVE

It only works in the body of a person with ovaries. This surgery blocks the fallopian tubes so that an egg cannot be fertilized.

HOW TO USE IT:

- A person needs a referral from a doctor to a surgeon.
- A person can't get pregnant after having the surgery.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I comfortable having surgery?
- Is a permanent option right for me?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- This birth control is permanent.
- It does not change periods or the

menstrual cycle.

- A person may be in pain or discomfort after surgery and need time to recover.
- Surgery may cause bleeding, infection and/or a reaction to anaesthetic.
- Some doctors may not do the surgery on younger people or people without children.
- It does not protect against STIs.

VASECTOMY (Surgery)

99.9% EFFECTIVE

It only works in the body of a person with a penis. The surgery blocks the vas deferens, stopping sperm from leaving the testicles to fertilize an egg. It is important to use another type of birth control until a doctor confirms that the surgery worked.

HOW TO USE IT:

- A person needs a referral from a doctor to a surgeon in order for it to be covered by Alberta Health.
- A person can't impregnate a partner after having the surgery.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I comfortable having surgery?
- Is a permanent option right for me?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- This birth control is permanent.
- Surgery may cause pain, swelling and/or infection.
- A vasectomy does not make someone sterile immediately. A doctor needs to check ejaculate (cum) a few months after the surgery to make sure it worked.
- It does not protect against STIs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DOES PREGNANCY HAPPEN?

For pregnancy to happen, there needs to be an egg from the body of a person with ovaries and sperm (ejaculate) from the body of a person with a penis. Sexual activity that could cause a pregnancy includes:

- Vaginal intercourse (penis inside the vagina)
- Any sexual activity where ejaculate or pre-ejaculate comes in contact with the vulva, including anal intercourse (penis inside the anus)

DO I NEED TO SEE A DOCTOR TO GET BIRTH CONTROL?

Sometimes. Each method in this booklet includes information on how to get it. A person can talk to a doctor about any of the methods of birth control.

Walk-in clinics, community clinics and Alberta Health Services Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinics are available for people without a family doctor. Many pharmacists in Alberta are also authorized to prescribe birth control.

WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD BIRTH CONTROL?

Some Alberta Health Services Reproductive Health Clinics offer low-cost birth control. Condoms are available for FREE at Centre for Sexuality. Just drop by during business hours.

WHY ISN'T THERE MUCH INFORMATION AVAILABLE ABOUT SPERMICIDE, THE SPONGE OR THE DIAPHRAGM?

Diaphragms and contraceptive sponges are still available, but have become less popular as more reliable and easier to use methods become available.

DOES HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL HAVE SIDE EFFECTS OR HEALTH RISKS?

Every medication, including hormonal birth control, has potential side effects and can affect every person differently. However, birth control generally has minimal side effects and does not carry higher risks than pregnancy.

IS THERE ANY BIRTH CONTROL THAT IS 100% EFFECTIVE?

Only abstinence (not having sex) will protect 100% against pregnancy. However, there are many birth control methods that are over 99% effective. When used with barrier methods like condoms, this greatly reduces the chances of pregnancy.

MY BIRTH CONTROL FAILED. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If someone thinks their birth control has failed - for example, if a condom breaks or someone forgets to take their birth control as directed - emergency contraception is available without a prescription in Alberta. See page 10 for more information.



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