

Family Planning

Birth Control

After birth you may want to consider birth control options. It's possible to get pregnant after birth – even if your period hasn't started yet.

When you're deciding on a method of birth control it's your choice which method you will choose to use or whether you will use birth control at all. Discuss with your health care provider and think about:

- how well it works
- whether it affects breastfeeding or chestfeeding
- how easy it is to use
- whether it protects against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- whether it is available to you and free of charge



DID YOU KNOW?

Withdrawal (pulling the penis out before ejaculation) is NOT an effective method of birth control. Neither is douching or rinsing the vagina after sex.



DID YOU KNOW?

Lactation amenorrhea method (LAM) is a way to use breastfeeding or chestfeeding to temporarily help prevent pregnancy. It must be used correctly to work.

When can I use LAM as birth control?

LAM only works if your:

1. Baby is less than 6 months old.
2. You don't have a period (amenorrhea).
When your periods start, use some other birth control method.
3. Baby is exclusively breastfeeding or chestfeeding day and night. This means that the baby receives only human milk.

LAM does not work if you don't have all 3 things above. Talk to your health care provider to see if LAM is right for you.



DID YOU KNOW?

There are prescription contraceptives available for free for B.C. residents. If you are in the wait period for MSP coverage, the pharmacist will ask you to sign a form for exceptional coverage. To learn more: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/what-we-cover/prescription-contraceptives



KEY TAKEAWAY

All people have the right to make decisions about contraception and family planning. Your care provider's responsibility is to be supportive. Their role is to provide you with information, help you know what contraception choices are available, listen to you, and work with you to learn what is best for you. This process is also called informed consent for contraception.

MOST EFFECTIVE Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
<p>IUS (progesterone-releasing intrauterine system)</p> <p>Small t-shaped device inserted and left in the uterus</p>	<p>About 1 in 1,000 users will get pregnant within a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more effective than sterilization • fertility returns as soon as it's removed • prevents pregnancy for 3 to 5 years • makes periods lighter and less crampy, without changing natural hormonal cycles • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first 3 to 4 periods may be extra heavy and crampy • may stop periods • no protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
<p>IUD (copper or plastic intrauterine device)</p> <p>Small t-shaped device inserted and left in the uterus</p>	<p>Less than 1 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prevents pregnancy for 3 to 10 years • fertility returns as soon as it's removed • safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copper IUD may make periods heavier or more painful • no protection from STIs
<p>Sterilization</p> <p>Vasectomy – cutting and sealing the tubes that carry sperm</p> <p>Tubal occlusion (“tubes tied”) – cutting or blocking the tubes that carry eggs</p>	<p>Vasectomy: less than 1½ in 1,000 pregnancies within a year</p> <p>Tubes tied: up to 2 in 1,000 pregnancies within a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paid for by MSP • vasectomy requires no hospital stay • tubes can be tied during caesarean • safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small chance of complications from surgery • permanent • no protection from STIs

VERY EFFECTIVE Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
Depo-Provera® shot Hormone injection given every 12 weeks	About 4 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may make periods lighter or stop them • safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • doesn't interfere with sex • one shot prevents pregnancy for 3 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may cause irregular periods, depression, weight gain • no protection from STIs • may weaken bones • may take 1 to 2 years to get pregnant after use
Oral contraceptive pill ("the pill") Daily hormone prescription pill	About 7 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used as directed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • may make periods more regular • may lower the risk of some cancers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may cause weight gain, headache and nausea • may increase risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke • may not work if taking other medicines • no protection from STIs • in rare cases, may lower your milk supply • must be taken daily
Progesterone-only oral contraceptive pill ("mini pill") Daily hormone prescription pill	Less than 1 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used as directed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • no estrogen, so no estrogen-related side effects • safe to use when breastfeeding or chestfeeding • no decrease to milk supply • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may not work if taking other medicines • no protection from STIs • must be taken daily
Contraceptive patch Hormone patch worn on the skin	About 7 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used as directed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • may make periods more regular • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can come off – must check daily • must replace weekly • may increase risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke • may cause weight gain, headache and nausea • no protection from STIs • may lower your milk supply • much less effective for people over 90 kg (200 lb)
Vaginal ring Hormone-releasing ring inserted into the vagina each month	Less than 1 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used as directed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inserted by user and remains in place for 3 weeks • doesn't interfere with sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be awkward to insert • may increase risk of blood clots, heart attack and stroke • may cause weight gain and headache • may lower your milk supply • no protection from STIs

LEAST EFFECTIVE Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
Condom Sheath worn over the penis	About 2 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used perfectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no prescription needed protects against most STIs safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can slip off or break can cause allergic reaction
Diaphragm or cervical cap Cover for the uterus inserted through the vagina	Up to 16 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can last several years can be put in as late as 6 hours before sex safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> must be fitted by a doctor and refitted after pregnancy or weight change may be hard to insert must be used with spermicide, which can cause allergic reaction risk of bladder infection can't be used during period no protection against STIs may not be widely available in Canada
Female condom Soft plastic tube inserted into the vagina	Up to 21 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no prescription needed protects against most STIs safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can be hard to insert can be noisy in use can be expensive
Fertility awareness Tracking your menstrual cycle to figure out when you're able to get pregnant	Up to 24 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low cost teaches about fertility patterns safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> menstrual cycle must be regular may not work while breastfeeding or chestfeeding must carefully monitor cycle at times, must avoid sex or use another method no protection from STIs contraceptive effects of hormone therapies for trans and non-binary people are not reliable
Vaginal spermicide Medication inserted into the vagina. Best used with another method, like condoms	Up to 30 in 100 users will get pregnant within a year when used alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no prescription needed adds lubrication safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can cause allergic reaction may need to be inserted 15 to 20 minutes before sex only works for 1 hour may increase chance of STIs

EMERGENCY Birth Control Methods

Type	Failure Rate	Pros	Cons
Emergency contraceptive pills	<p>Ulipristal acetate (Ella One®) – Up to 3 in 100 users will get pregnant if taken within 5 days</p> <p>Plan B® – Up to 5 in 100 users will get pregnant if taken within 72 hours</p> <p>Yuzpe (Ovral®) – Up to 6 in 100 users will get pregnant if taken within 24 hours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be used up to 5 days after sex if another method has failed • 1 dose will not likely affect breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may cause nausea and vomiting • may disrupt your period • no protection from STIs • may be less effective in individuals who have a higher body weight
Copper IUD	Less than 1 in 100 users will get pregnant if inserted within 7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be used within 5 days after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy • very effective for up to 10 years • safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may make period heavier or more painful • may be difficult to find a health care provider to insert it within 7 days • no protection from STIs

For more information, talk with your health care provider or contact Options for Sexual Health at 1-800-739-7367 or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.



DID YOU KNOW?

Sex can happen whenever you're healed and you and your partner(s) feel ready. If it's uncomfortable, try a warm bath, a water-soluble lubricant and plenty of foreplay.

