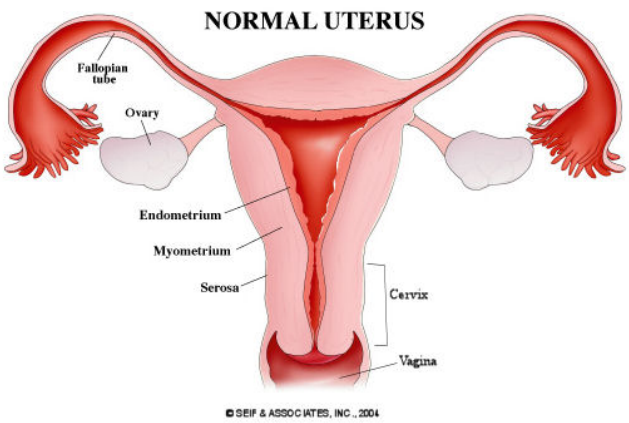
Birth Control

Birth control is a way for a woman to keep from getting pregnant. Deciding to use birth control is an important choice for you and your partner. Here are some things to remember about birth control:

- Talk with your doctor about the best method for you.
- Total abstinence (not having any contact between your sex organs and your partner's sex organs) is the only way to be 100% sure of not getting pregnant.
- Use your method of birth control the right way.
- Keep track of when you had your last menstrual period.



Types Of Birth Control:

- **Hormonal methods.**
- **Barrier methods.**
- **Natural family planning.**
- **Permanent (life-time) methods.**

Hormonal methods put hormones into your body to prevent pregnancy. Hormonal methods include:

- The Pill. Hormones in the pill keep you from putting out eggs. You must take the pill every day. If you miss even one pill, have your partner use a condom for the rest of the month. Some medicines (such as antibiotics) can keep the pill from working. Let your doctor know if you are taking any other medicines or herbs, such as St. John's Wort.
- The Patch. The patch is like a small band-aid. It releases hormones. You wear it for three weeks and take it off for one week. This allows your period to occur. Then a new patch is put on. These are the same hormones as the pill. You do not have to remember to take it every day. You do need to keep to a schedule.
- "Depo Shots" (Depo-Provera Injections). These are hormones given in a shot. Every 3 months a new shot is needed. This method is easy, because you do not have to think about birth control every day. You must remember to come to the clinic every 3 months to get a new shot.
- Vaginal Ring (such as NuvaRing). The ring is a small, round ring that a woman puts in her vagina once a month. The ring prevents pregnancy by releasing hormones into the body. It stays in place for three weeks and is left out for one week. This allows your period to occur. Then a new ring is put in.
- Implants (such as Implanon). These are thin, plastic tubes put under the skin in the upper arm. The implanted tubes release hormones that keep the ovaries from putting out eggs. Implants can prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years. But then you must have the worn-out implants removed. Removing the implants may cause some bruising, bleeding or scarring.
- IUD (The Hormonal Type, called the "Mirena") This is a small piece of plastic which is put into the uterus by a doctor. It releases hormones and can prevent pregnancy for up to 5 years. The copper IUD (called the "ParaGard") is also made of plastic. It releases copper continuously and lasts up to 10 years. This type of IUD cannot prevent sperm from fertilizing an egg, but it does prevent a newly conceived embryo from attaching to the wall of the uterus. IUDs have been made more safe than they used to be. But there is still a risk that any IUD can tear a hole through (perforate) the uterus or cervix. This can sometimes cause infertility.
- Emergency Birth Control. Emergency birth control is sometimes called the "morning after pill" or "Plan B." This method can prevent pregnancy any time up to 120 hours after unprotected sex. You can get this from the drugstore or clinic if you are over 18. The sooner it is started, the better. It works 2 ways:
  - It prevents sperm from reaching the egg.
  - If the egg has already been fertilized by sperm, it prevents the newly conceived embryo from attaching to the wall of the uterus.

Side effects most common with hormonal birth control are:

- Weight gain, thinner hair, headaches, feeling sad.
- Breast lumps (sometimes cancerous).

It is very important not to smoke while using hormonal birth control. Smoking worsens side effects such as blood clots. Blood clots can cause strokes or heart attacks.

Barrier methods block sperm from reaching the egg.

- Condoms. Latex condoms are the only type of birth control that provide some protection against HIV/AIDS. Not having sex is the only way to be 100% sure of not getting an STD. Condoms protect both men and women. Condoms are easy to buy. You do not need a prescription. You do need to use a new condom each time you have sex. Always use latex condoms unless you are allergic to latex. Never use Vaseline with condoms. Condoms work better when used with a spermicidal:
  - Foam.
  - Cream.
  - Jelly.
- Spermicidal foams, jellies, creams and suppositories. These work by killing the sperm before they can reach the egg. They must be used each time BEFORE you have sex. They can be bought without a prescription. They work much better if a condom is used at the same time. If you do not use a condom at the same time, they may not work.
- Diaphragm. This is a soft rubber cup that you put inside the vagina. The diaphragm goes over the opening of the cervix. It must be put over the cervix before sex each time. You need to leave it in for 6 - 8 hours after having sex. It works best when used together with spermicidal jelly. You can clean your diaphragm, and use it over and over. It can last up to 2 years. It must be fitted to you by a doctor.

Natural family planning

- Abstinence (No Sex).
- Natural Family Planning (NFP). The most sure type of NFP is the ovulation method. You need to notice your cervical mucus each time you wipe with toilet paper. If your mucus is slippery (like raw egg white), this means you are fertile and able to become pregnant. If your mucus is dry or there's none at all, then you are not fertile. On these days you could safely have unprotected sex with your partner, and not become pregnant.

There are only about 5 days a month when you are fertile. A barrier method such as a condom with spermicidal foam can be used on these days. A condom is also helpful during your period when mucus is hard to notice. NFP has no side effects because you are not putting any chemicals into your body. If you do it carefully, you can avoid getting pregnant as long as you want to. You will also know when you are most fertile when the time comes that you do want to become pregnant.

Permanent (life-time) birth control. If you are sure that you do not want to have any more children, you may want to use a permanent method of birth control. These are small surgeries in which the tubes that carry the eggs or sperm are cut or closed. These surgeries are effective and have a low risk of problems. They include:

- Female: A tubal ligation.
- Male: A vasectomy

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