

Postpartum Birth Control

What things should I think about when choosing a birth control method after pregnancy?

To choose the right birth control method for you, consider the following:

- Do you want to have more children and if so how soon?
- How effective is the method at preventing pregnancy?
- How easy is it to use?
- Does it affect breastfeeding?
- Do you need a prescription to get it?
- Does it protect you against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?
- Do you have any health concerns?

Which birth control methods are best to prevent pregnancy?

The following table shows all the birth control methods and how well they prevent pregnancy.

<p>MORE EFFECTIVE</p> <p>LEAST EFFECTIVE</p>	<p>Less than 1 pregnancy per 100 women</p>	<p>Implant (Nexplanon®) Effective for 3 years; contains hormones; placed 6 weeks after delivery; no effect on milk supply</p>	<p>Copper IUD (Paragard®) Effective for 10 years; no hormones; placed 6 weeks after delivery; no effect on milk supply</p>	<p>Progesterone Hormone IUD Effective for 3-5 years; contains hormones; placed 6 weeks after delivery; no effect on milk supply</p>	<p>Sterilization Male or female; can be performed 1-2 days after delivery or 6 weeks later; no effect on milk supply</p>	
	<p>6-9 pregnancies per 100 women</p>	<p>Injection (Depo Provera®) Must be given every 3 months; contains hormones; no effect on milk supply if given at least 6 weeks after delivery</p>	<p>Combined birth control pill Must be taken daily; contains hormones; started 6 weeks after delivery; ok to use if not breastfeeding or breastfeeding is well established</p>	<p>Progesterone-only pill Must be taken daily; contains hormones; started 6 weeks after delivery; ok to use if not breastfeeding or breastfeeding is well established</p>	<p>Patch Replaced weekly; contains hormones; started 6 weeks after delivery; ok to use if not breastfeeding or breastfeeding is well established</p>	<p>Vaginal ring Replaced every 3 weeks; contains hormones; started 6 weeks after delivery; ok to use if not breastfeeding or breastfeeding is well established</p>
	<p>12-24 pregnancies per 100 women</p>	<p>Condoms Male or female; protects against STDs</p>	<p>Diaphragm Must be refitted after delivery</p>			
	<p>28 or more pregnancies per 100 women</p>	<p>Fertility awareness method Very limited because return to fertility after delivery is unpredictable</p>	<p>Withdrawal Also known as "pulling out"</p>	<p>Spermicides May increase the risk of getting HIV in some people</p>		

After delivery, when can I start a new birth control method?

Every method can be started at your 6-week postpartum visit, and many methods can be started before you leave the hospital after delivery.

When is it safe to have another baby?

Spacing pregnancies is important. It gives your body time to heal and recover. Waiting at least 12 to 18 months after giving birth to become pregnant again reduces the risk your next baby will be low birth weight or delivered preterm.

What is the implant?

The implant (Nexplanon®) is a small plastic rod about the size of a matchstick that your health care provider inserts under the skin of the upper arm. It releases hormones that prevent pregnancy and is effective for 3 years. It must be removed by your health care provider.

What is the intrauterine device (IUD)?

The intrauterine device (IUD) is a small, T-shaped, plastic device that is inserted and left inside the uterus. The IUD must be removed by a health care provider. Two types are available in the United States. One type, contains progesterone hormones and lasts for 3-5 years. The second type is the copper IUD, known as Paragard®. It lasts for as long as 10 years and contains no hormones.

What is sterilization and who is it an option for?

If you're **sure** you don't want more children, surgical sterilization can be performed immediately after delivery and is a very effective method of birth control. Sterilization procedures can be performed at the time of cesarean birth or within the first two days of vaginal delivery. In addition, always remember that male sterilization (vasectomy) is an equally effective option for your partner and can be performed at any time.

What is the birth control shot?

The shot ("Depo" or Depo-Provera®) is given in a large muscle every 3 months. It contains hormones that prevent pregnancy.

What is the birth control pill? What type of pill can I take (if breastfeeding or not)?

The birth control pill is a pill that you have to take every day at the same time of day. It contains a hormone that prevents pregnancy. Until breastfeeding is well established, a birth control pill containing only progesterone (Micronor® or the "minipill") should be used. After your milk supply is well established or if you are not breastfeeding there are many pill options available; your provider can help you choose one that is right for you.

If you miss a pill, you need to know what to do. If you are uncertain, contact your health care provider.

Which birth control methods can be used while breastfeeding?

All types of intrauterine devices (IUDs), the implant, the injection, and progestin-only pills can safely be used while breastfeeding. Male and female condoms and diaphragms are also safe.

Which birth control methods also protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

The male latex or polyurethane condom gives the best protection against STDs. The female condom provides some protection. With all other methods, you also should use a male or female condom to protect against STDs.

What is the skin patch and vaginal ring? When can I use these options?

The patch is a small (1.75 square inch) adhesive patch that is worn on the skin. It contains hormones that prevent pregnancy and are slowly released into your body. A new patch is worn each week for 3 weeks in a row. During the fourth week, a patch is not worn, and you will have your menstrual period.

The ring is a flexible ring that you insert into the upper vagina. It releases hormones that prevent pregnancy into your body. It is worn inside the vagina for 21 days and then removed for 7 days. During those 7 days, you have your menstrual period. Then you insert a new ring.

If you are breastfeeding, estrogen containing birth control should be avoided until breastfeeding is well established. If you are not breastfeeding, these methods can be started at your 6-week postpartum visit.

What if I have sex without any birth control?

You may get pregnant even if exclusively breastfeeding.

If you have sex without any birth control or the birth control method did not work (for instance, the condom broke during sex), you can use emergency birth control to prevent pregnancy. Emergency birth control is available in a pill form or as a copper IUD. The pills must be taken or the IUD inserted within 5 days of having unprotected sex.

Where can I get emergency birth control?

The most effective form of emergency contraception is a Paragard® IUD, which must be placed by your doctor. One type of pill (Plan B One-step®) is available at any pharmacy without a prescription for all girls and women, however this method is not effective for women with a BMI over 25 or weight over 180 lbs. You can discuss other emergency birth control options with your health care provider.