

PeriodicAly

What Are the Most Effective Forms of Contraception?

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GLOSSARY

cervix (n)

the lower part of the uterus

contraception (n)

devices, actions, medical procedures, or medications that help prevent pregnancy

estrogen (n)

a hormone that helps regulate the menstrual cycle

fertility (n)

the quality of being able to become pregnant

hormonally (adv)

affecting the endocrine system, working chemically

mechanically (adv)

physically obstructing or preventing pregnancy

ovulate (v)

the maturation of an egg, the process by which an egg becomes ready for fertilization

progesterone (n)

a hormone that helps ready the body for reproducing

progestin (n)

a synthetic form of progesterone

systemic (adj)

affecting the entire body, not just one area

vaginal mucosa (n)

the rich layer of mucus within the vaginal canal



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TYPES OF CONTRACEPTION (1/2)

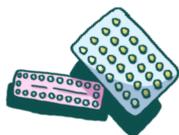
Birth control is not just limited to the pill. In fact, there are now many different options for contraception. We have listed out a few options out there!

BENEFITS

CONCERNS

GOOD TO KNOW

OCPS/ MINI- PILLS



- The ability to discontinue anytime
- You are in control of your own fertility

- May be a hassle for people who forget to take pills; skipping reduces efficacy

- Physicians may recommend use for acne

PATCH



- Doesn't need to be changed daily
- Not pill based

- Does need to be changed weekly
- Visible
- Can fall off

- Applied to the abdomen, buttock, or upper torso (the location changes w/ each patch)

RING



- Only changed once every month
- Usually less side effects than OCPS

- Can be tedious to use
- May be felt during sexual intercourse

- May provide some relief for those with PCOS or generally painful cycles

There are a few different ways to think about the various methods of contraception. You can think about it in terms of how they function, their mode of delivery, or how frequently they need to be used.



**FUNCTION
(HORMONALLY,
MECHANICALLY)**



**MODE OF DELIVERY (PILL,
PATCH, RING, INJECTION,
IMPLANT OR IUD)**



**FREQUENCY OF USE
(DAILY, WEEKLY,
MONTHLY, OR EVEN
LONGER)**

Oral contraception pills (OCPs) are usually packaged with 3 weeks of hormonal pills and one week of blank/placebo pills to simulate a monthly menstrual cycle. There's no biological reason for why you need to get a period every month so brands have shifted over to providing only hormonal pills. You also have the option of skipping your blank "period" week and going straight to another "hormonal" week, eliminating your period altogether (called menstrual suppression).(1)
The mini-pill, which contains only progesterin, must also be taken every day and functions similarly to combined hormonal pills.(1)



There are two other forms of combined hormonal contraception that function exactly the same as OCPs, but are delivered in a different format and have a different frequency of use.



The first is the patch, a small sticker you apply to your body and change once a week. The patch also contains estrogen and progesterone, which it releases to be absorbed through your skin.(2)

The other form of combined hormonal contraception is the ring, which is placed in the vagina and also releases hormones. Instead of through the skin, these hormones are absorbed through the vaginal mucosa.(3)



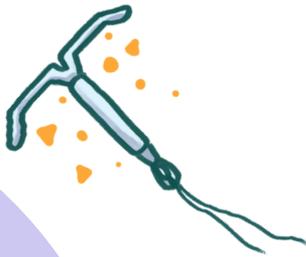
There are also two other forms of progestin-only contraception which function similarly to the mini-pill. The first is the Depo-Provera injection, which is a shot you get once every 3 months; the injection also works by suppressing ovulation (5).



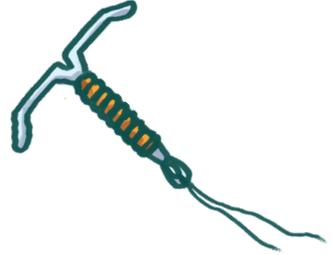
The other form of non-pill progestin-only contraception is the implant, otherwise known as Nexplanon. The Nexplanon is a small, thin plastic tube about the size and shape of a toothpick (but not sharp at the ends!) that is inserted under the skin of your inner upper arm and releases its hormone to be absorbed by the body. Insertion of the Nexplanon is a simple office procedure, and once it's inserted it can't be seen (although you can feel it if you press down hard on the flesh of your inner arm)(6).

That brings us to the final form of contraception we'll be reviewing in this article: intrauterine devices, known as IUDs for short, which are the most effective type of contraception at more than 99% efficacy. There are two types of IUDs, and they are different from all the other forms of contraception we've discussed so far in that they don't function through systemic hormones. In fact, one of them doesn't use hormones at all (7).

Hormonal IUD



Non-hormonal IUD



The first and better-known type of IUD is a progestin-only device. However, unlike Depo and Nexplanon, this type of IUD releases hormones that only act locally inside of the uterus, instead of systemically. This IUD is a small, plastic T-shaped device that is placed through the cervix and into the vagina. The second type of IUD, which is non-hormonal, can last for a decade. This IUD, called the ParaGard, is made of copper and exerts its contraceptive effects by making the uterus a very unfriendly place for a fertilized egg to implant.(7)

No matter which type of contraception you're considering, you should talk to your healthcare provider who can help you navigate your choices. When choosing which form of contraception is right for you, it's important to consider what fits best for your lifestyle and needs.



TYPES OF CONTRACEPTION (2/2)

BENEFITS

CONCERNS

GOOD TO KNOW

INJECTION



- Isn't something on or in your body,
- Nothing to keep track of or carry with you

- Takes longer to return to fertility (9 - 18 months)
- Re-administer every 3 months

- Can self-administer injections
- Eases cramping and endometriosis symptoms

IMPLANT



- Effective for up to 3 years
- Discrete and hands-off

- Needs to be inserted and removed in a clinic

- Backup contraception advisable for first week
- Does not use estrogen

IUD



- Hormonal: acts locally, Mirena lasts up to 8 years
- Copper: non-hormonal, lasts up to 10 years, >99% effective

- Needs to be inserted and removed in a clinic
- Copper: can result in heavier periods

- May be a better option for teenagers
- Different brands last different lengths of time



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Author: Fiona Miller, MS4 MD candidate UCSF

Editor: Anika Bukkapatnam

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CITATIONS

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When it comes to contraception, there are many options on the market. While all methods of contraception are designed to prevent pregnancy, they each have different modalities and mechanisms of action. How to make sense of it all? In this article, we'll break down the most effective forms of contraception, how they're used, and how they work, to help you figure out which option might be right for you.

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