Your guide to contraception

There are many different contraception methods available. This booklet shows most of the available methods, together with advantages and disadvantages. For full details, see FPA leaflets on this subject and for how each method works, look at an FPA leaflet. There are also many other books and leaflets that you can read if you wish.

Choosing methods

How do I choose which method to use?

• Whether you (or a partner) want to use the method every day, every time you have sex or intermittently.
• Whether you (or a partner) want to become pregnant soon after stopping contraception.
• Whether you want the contraception to be effective in the short term or the long term.
• How reliable you think the method will be.
• How much you can afford to pay each month.
• Whether you have medical problems that may affect your choice of contraception, such as asthma, epilepsy or diabetes.
• Your answers should influence your decision about which contraception to use. They may also change over the years as your lifestyle and relationships do.

In contraception-free and where can I go to obtain contraception?

You can usually obtain contraception from your doctor or nurse or call the FPA helpline on 0845 122 8687 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). You can also get free contraception from community services, such as sexual health centres and灵敏性 units. You can also contact hospital and accident and emergency departments (given free to all men and women) for emergency contraception. If you are under 18 years old, you may need to ask your parents for permission.

In contraception clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.

Remember – contact your doctor, practice nurse, or a midwife, health visitor or advice centre.

What is emergency contraception?

Emergency contraception is any method used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or up to five days after the last time contraceptive failure. The emergency contraceptive pill can be taken up to five days after unprotected sex or up to five days after the earliest time when contraceptive failure occurred.

Emergency contraception is available without prescription from most pharmacies. They also sell condoms, diaphragms and spermicide.

If you are 16 or over you can buy the emergency contraceptive pill and in Scotland NHS 24 on 0845 4 24 24 24.

You can obtain emergency contraception, from:

• A young people’s service (these will have special arrangements for younger women – see your nearest contraception, clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.

You can also get details of general practice that are best for you.

• You can get details of your nearest contraception clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.

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Your guide to contraception

There are many different contraceptive methods available. This leaflet shows most of the available methods, explains how they work, tells you how effective they are and the main advantages and disadvantages of each method. It is for you and each partner to decide which methods are best suited to you. 

To help you choose which method to use, you can:
- complete a decision-making tool to help you think about some of the things that you and your partner may want;
- talk to your health care provider about different options available, your expectations and what is available in your area;
- contact fpa’s helpline to get free confidential information and advice on certain points. All methods of contraception are free; however, if you are under 16, you will need permission from your parent or a responsible adult to be able to access contraception.

How do I choose which method to use?

There are many methods of contraception. To choose which one is best for you, it is worth taking the time to find out as much as possible about each method so that you can choose from it is worth taking the time to find out how each method works, how effective it is and the main advantages and disadvantages. 

How do I obtain emergency contraception?

You can obtain emergency contraception from:
- some hospital accident and emergency departments (phone first to check);
- some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

If you are 16 or over you can buy the emergency contraceptive pill, from:
- Y ou can get details of GUM or sexual health centres, contact fpa.
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- you can get details of GUM or sexual health centres, contact fpa.
- fpa’s helpline on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct, on 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practices at sexual health direct.
How do I choose which method to use?

You can choose from a wide range of methods of contraception, including:

• the pill (oral contraceptive pill)
• skin patches
• implants
• the intrauterine device (IUD)
• the intrauterine system (IUS)
• the contraceptive injection
• the contraceptive implant
• the contraceptive sponge or condom
• the diaphragm
• the cervical cap

You should choose the method which is best for you and your partner. It is important to think about what you (and your partner) want to achieve, such as:

• how you (and a partner) want contraception to work
• whether you (or a partner) want to become pregnant fairly soon, many years away or not at all
• you are fully breastfeeding – this means you are not giving your baby any other liquid or solid food

Your answers should influence your decision about what contraception to use. They will also change over the years as your lifestyle and relationships change.

In contraception free and when can

You can go on contraception free, including emergency contraception, in some general practices, unless they don’t provide contraception or a contraception clinic or a sexual health clinic (usually at a young age or in early sexual activity).

One of some general practices (GPs) clinic. You can also go on contraception free, including emergency contraception, from a hospital accident and emergency department (please check to make sure they are providing contraception free of charge).

If you are on a low income you may be able to get contraception free from most pharmacies. They will also provide emergency contraception.

How can I get contraception free?

You can find out about all sexual health services, including contraception, including details of contraception, sexual health and assault referral centres. You can also get help and information from fpa.org.uk, fpa’s helpline 0845 122 8690 or at www.fpa.org.uk. You can also call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 999.

What is emergency contraception?

If you had unprotected sex (sex without using contraception), or think your last period was delayed or irregular, you should consider your options for emergency contraception. There are two methods of emergency contraception:

• hormonal emergency contraception (known as the emergency contraceptive pill or emergency contraception)
• the intrauterine device (IUD)

How does the emergency pill work?

The emergency contraceptive pill is a tablet that contains the hormone levonorgestrel. It must be taken within three days (72 hours) of having unprotected sex. It is very effective and is more effective the sooner it is taken.

If you have had unprotected sex, that is, sex without using contraception, or think your period is late or irregular, you should consider your options for emergency contraception. There are two methods of emergency contraception:

• hormonal emergency contraception (known as the emergency contraceptive pill or emergency contraception)
• the intrauterine device (IUD)

How effective is the emergency pill?

It is very effective and effectively follows the course if taken after 5 days after unprotected sex and 20% of pregnancies expected to occur if no emergency contraception had been used, the emergency pill will prevent:

• up to 95 per cent if taken within 24 hours
• up to 89 per cent if taken within 24–72 hours
• up to 56 per cent if taken between 72–96 hours

The copper IUD

How can I get details of GUM or sexual health clinics from a telephone number or website?

You can get help and information from fpa.org.uk or fpa’s helpline 0845 122 8687 or for details of general practice clinics from a telephone number or website.

If you are pregnant and want to continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby, you should consider:

• the copper IUD
• hormonal emergency contraception

If you are pregnant and want to lose the baby, you should consider:

• the copper IUD
• hormonal emergency contraception

In preventing pregnancy if:

• you are fully breastfeeding – this means you are not giving your baby any other liquid or solid food
• you are menopausal – this means you are not having a period and may have a negative result even though you are pregnant, if you don’t know when your next period is due, the earliest time to do a test is 21 days after unprotected sex.
• you are pregnant for the first time and you need to think about what you want to do. You can choose to:
• continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
• end the pregnancy by having an abortion
• continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby

Transitionally infections

Sexually transmitted infections

Most methods of contraception do not protect against sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. There are a range of methods of contraception that work to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections. Diaphragms and caps may also increase the risk of infection. Diaphragms and caps may also increase the risk of infection.

If you are concerned about sexually transmitted infections, you should consider:

• the copper IUD
• hormonal emergency contraception

Can I use contraception in a period of breastfeeding?

Some methods of contraception can cause a period of breastfeeding to be delayed or irregular, such as:

• the pill (oral contraceptive pill)
• the contraceptive injection
• the contraceptive implant
• the contraceptive sponge
• the diaphragm
• the cervical cap

You are advised to use a period of contraception that is best for you

We believe that everyone has the right to access to appropriate, good quality reproductive health care and information, and we work to support and promote this.

It is your right and your responsibility to make informed decisions about your health and your life. It is our right and our responsibility to support you and your choices, and to respect your choices.

If you are uncertain about what to do, you can choose to:
• continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
• end the pregnancy by having an abortion
• continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby

Your guide to contraception

There are many different contraceptive methods available. This booklet shows most of the available methods and explains how they work, their effectiveness, who and the main advantages and disadvantages of each method. It was written for and by expert women who are interested in the contraceptive methods available.

Contraception needs to be used until the menopause. That is, until a woman has not had her period for two years if aged under 50 or for one year after age 50.

How do I choose which method to use?

You can find out about all sexual health services, including contraception, including details of contraception, sexual health and assault referral centres. You can also talk through the different methods with a doctor or nurse or call fpa’s helpline.

There are so many methods of contraception to choose from it is worth taking the time to find out what contraception to use. There are two methods of contraception specifically for men – hormonal and spermicides. The figures quoted in this leaflet do not include the sexual and mental health consequences of each method.

The information in this booklet is based on the national guidelines for medicines and services for contraception. The information in this booklet can only give you basic information about contraception.

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Your guide to contraception

There are many different contraceptive methods available. This booklet shows most of the available methods and where you can get help to find the one that suits you. Your sexual health professional can answer any questions you have and give you the advantages and disadvantages of different methods. Here are some of the methods listed at an overview.

Contraceptive methods:

• Barrier method
• hormonal method
• long-acting reversible contraceptives
• permanent contraception

Barrier methods:

• Condom
• Vaginal diaphragm
• female condom

hormonal methods:

• oral contraceptive pill
• implant
• injection
• intrauterine device (IUD)
• injectable contraception

The different methods of contraception are based on different principles and may have different side effects. It is important to have your options explained and discuss them with your sexual health professional.

Your answers should influence your decision about which contraception to use. They will also change over the years as your lifestyle and relationships do.

Contraception is free and where can I get it?

You can obtain free contraception, including emergency contraception, from:

• your doctor or nurse or call 111
• also talk through the different methods with a practice nurse
• you can find more detailed information

There are so many methods of contraception to use. Y our answers should influence your decision about which contraception to use. They will also change over the years as your lifestyle and relationships do.

You can obtain free contraception, including emergency contraception, from:

• your doctor or nurse or call 111
• also talk through the different methods with a practice nurse
• you can find more detailed information

Contraception needs to be used until the menopause. That is, until a woman has not had a period or any bleeding for five years after age 50
• under 50, and for one year if over 50.

How does the emergency pill work?

How effective is a copper IUD?

Have a look at the chart overleaf for more information on different methods of contraception. The figures quoted in this leaflet are and the main advantages and disadvantages of each method. The information in this booklet is based on the method's effectiveness in preventing pregnancy if:

- you have no periods.
- your baby is less than six months old
- you are nearly fully breastfeeding – this means giving your baby other liquids
- you have had an abortion in the last year

Do you want to get pregnant?

- continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
- end the pregnancy by having an abortion
- continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby

- if you are pregnant you need to think about what you want to do. You can choose to:

- continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
- end the pregnancy by having an abortion

What if I become pregnant?

- if you think you could be pregnant, do a pregnancy test as soon as possible. You can do a test from the first day of a missed period – before this time the level of pregnancy hormone, human chorionic gonadotrophin (hCG) may be too low to show up on a test and you may get a negative result even though you are pregnant. If you don’t know when your next period is due, the earliest time to do a test is 21 days after unprotected sex. If you are pregnant you need to think about what you want to do. You can choose to:

- continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
- end the pregnancy by having an abortion

If you want to get pregnant:

- you can get help and information from fpa’s helpline 0845 122 8690

Sexually transmitted infections

- if you are pregnant you need to think about what you want to do. You can choose to:

- continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
- end the pregnancy by having an abortion

If you want to get pregnant:

- you can get help and information from fpa’s helpline 0845 122 8690

pressed

• you have no periods.
• your baby is less than six months old
• you are nearly fully breastfeeding – this means giving your baby other liquids
• you have had an abortion in the last year

What if I become pregnant?

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- continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
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Sexually transmitted infections

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- end the pregnancy by having an abortion

If you want to get pregnant:

- you can get help and information from fpa’s helpline 0845 122 8690

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### Methods with no user failure – methods that do not depend on you remembering to take or use them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>How it works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IUD</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Very small chance of getting an infection.</td>
<td>May get ovarian cysts.</td>
<td>When the IUD is removed your fertility will return to normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IUS</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Over 99 per cent effective if taken according to instructions.</td>
<td>Pelvic inflammatory disease.</td>
<td>A small plastic and copper device is put into the uterus. It stops sperm reaching an egg and thins the lining of the uterus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implant</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Over 99 per cent effective if taken according to instructions.</td>
<td>Acne may occur.</td>
<td>Small silicone elastomer cylinder containing the hormone etonogestrel is slowly released from the hormone for some time afterwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sterilisation</strong></td>
<td>Permanent with no risk of conception</td>
<td>Can be temporary side effects.</td>
<td>Sterilisation fails.</td>
<td>Both partners should not be pregnant and not using contraception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male sterilisation</strong></td>
<td>Permanent with no risk of conception</td>
<td>Can make sex painful.</td>
<td>Male sterilisation is permanent, suitable for people who are sure they do not want any more children.</td>
<td>Male sterilisation is usually permanent with no risk of conception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spillage</strong></td>
<td>98 per cent effective</td>
<td>Often reduces bleeding, period may be heavier</td>
<td>Prevalence of blood clots, side-effects.</td>
<td>The spermicide used with polyurethane condoms must be of a high enough concentration to stop sperm from entering the vagina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barrier methods</strong></td>
<td>95 per cent effective if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Putting it in can interrupt sex.</td>
<td>For a barrier method to work, the male partner must ensure that the condom is put on the erect penis and that the female partner should use 100% natural spermicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condoms</strong></td>
<td>95 per cent effective if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Men must be comfortable using condoms.</td>
<td>Condoms can make sex painful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cervical cap with spermicide</strong>*</td>
<td>95 per cent effective if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Some women may experience breakthrough bleeding and spotting.</td>
<td>The diaphragm is fitted at the fertile time and the spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIY cervical cap</strong></td>
<td>95 per cent effective if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The cervical cap is made from rubber or latex. It is worn inside the vagina, and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male condom</strong></td>
<td>98 per cent effective</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>More suitable for people who are not using any contraception.</td>
<td>The male condom must be used with natural spermicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female condom</strong></td>
<td>95 per cent effective if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>More suitable for people who are not using any contraception.</td>
<td>The female condom must be used with natural spermicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birth control pill</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if taken according to instructions</td>
<td>Must be used correctly.</td>
<td>Very low risk but serious side-effects.</td>
<td>The pill is a combination of two hormones – estrogen and progestogen. The pill is taken daily and may contain ethinylestradiol and levonorgestrel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-lasting reversible methods</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if taken according to instructions</td>
<td>Not suitable for very overweight women or smokers over 35.</td>
<td>The diaphragm is fitted at the fertile time and the spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined pill (COC)</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if taken according to instructions</td>
<td>May get breakthrough bleeding and spotting.</td>
<td>Can make sex painful.</td>
<td>The combined pill contains the hormone estrogen and progestogen as a continuous combined pill or as a low-dose combined pill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progestogen-only pill (POP)</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if taken according to instructions</td>
<td>More suitable for people who are not using any contraception.</td>
<td>Very low risk but serious side-effects.</td>
<td>The progestogen-only pill contains the hormone progestogen, which slows ovulation and may also thicken cervical mucus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cerazette</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can make sex painful.</td>
<td>Can make sex painful.</td>
<td>The pill is a continuous progestogen-only pill that can be taken at any time of the month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diaphragm/cap with spermicide</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Some people may not be able to use it.</td>
<td>The diaphragm is fitted at the fertile time and the spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral contraceptives</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if taken according to instructions</td>
<td>More suitable for people who are not using any contraception.</td>
<td>Very low risk but serious side-effects.</td>
<td>Oral contraceptives are taken daily and may contain ethinylestradiol and levonorgestrel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implant</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if taken according to instructions</td>
<td>More suitable for people who are not using any contraception.</td>
<td>Not affected by other medicines.</td>
<td>An implant is a small, flexible, plastic ring put into the vagina that slowly releases the hormone levonorgestrel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural family planning</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Natural family planning involves abstaining from intercourse or learning effectively to predict ovulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persona/Fertility Monitor</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Must be used correctly.</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>The Persona/Fertility Monitor is a computerised monitor with instructions, up to 99 per cent effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraceptive jelly</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>Contraceptive jelly is viscous and sticky. It is put into the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraceptive sponge</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The contraceptive sponge is a flexible rubber sponge that is put in the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraceptive ring</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The contraceptive ring is a flexible plastic ring that is put into the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraceptive patch</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The contraceptive patch is a square patch that is put on the skin at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraceptive vaginal ring</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The contraceptive vaginal ring is a small, flexible, plastic ring that is put into the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
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<td><strong>Long-lasting reversible methods</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The long-lasting reversible methods are implantable, injectable, or intrauterine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implant</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The implant is a small, flexible, plastic ring that is put into the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrauterine system (IUS)</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The intrauterine system (IUS) is a small, flexible, plastic ring that is put into the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrauterine system (IUS)</strong></td>
<td>Over 99 per cent if used correctly</td>
<td>Can help protect both partners from STIs.</td>
<td>Few people can use this method effectively.</td>
<td>The intrauterine system (IUS) is a small, flexible, plastic ring that is put into the vagina at the fertile time and spermicide is put into the cap.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods with no user failure - methods that do not depend on you remembering to take or use them.

- Natural family planning
- Fertility awareness
- Billings method
- Symptothermal method
- Cervical mucus
- Basal body temperature

Methods with user failure - methods you have to use and think about regularly or each time you have sex. Must be used according to instructions.

- Combined pill (COC)
- Male condom
- Female condom
- Condom in oil
- Spermicides
- Spermicides with diaphragm
- Contraceptive ring
- Contraceptive patch
- Progestogen-only pill (POP)

Effectiveness

- Over 99 per cent effective if used according to instructions. Five years of use brings over 99 per cent effectiveness.
- Over 99.9 per cent effective if used correctly and consistently. Not suitable for women who may not use it correctly and consistently.
- Over 99.5 per cent effective if used according to instructions. Five years of use brings over 99.5 per cent effectiveness.
- Over 99 per cent effective if used according to instructions. Three years of use brings over 99 per cent effectiveness.

Side-effects

- Less than one woman in 100 will get pregnant in a year.
- Periods may stop altogether. Some women may experience headaches, acne, mood changes and breast tenderness.
- Acne may occur.
- If fitted after 40 it can stay in place until the menopause.
- Periods may stop, be irregular, painful or have diarrhoea.
- Periods become lighter, shorter, less painful.
- Sperm are killed by spermicides.

Other

- You only have to use it when you have sex.
- You don't have to think about it while you are using it.
- It is not affected if you vomit or have diarrhoea.
- You only have to use it when you have sex.
- No serious side-effects.

Other

- A general anaesthetic is usually required.
- Oil based products damage latex condoms.
- Putting it in can interrupt sex.
- No medical side-effects.
- A soft, thin polyurethane sheath must be used every time.
- No serious side-effects.
- You don't have to think about it while you are using it.
- It can be used as long as it works and removed from the body so that you can stop using it.
How to find a contraception service

You can obtain contraception, including emergency contraception, from:

• a contraception clinic or a sexual health clinic
• a general practice, unless they say they don't provide contraception services
• a hospital, such as an accident and emergency department (phone first to check)
• a family planning association or a sexual health organisation
• a general practice, unless they say they don't provide contraception services
• an abortion service
• a pharmacy
• a hospital, such as a genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinic or a sexual health clinic
• a pregnancy advice line
• a health centre

If you are pregnant you need to think about:

• whether you (or a partner) want to become pregnant fairly soon, many years away or not at all
• your baby is less than six months old
• you are fully breastfeeding – this means you are feeding your baby breast milk only, and the baby is not expected to have been weaned
• you are under 16
• you are over 50, and for one year if over 50.

What is emergency contraception?

If you have had unprotected sex, you can take emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy. Emergency contraception can be used up to five days after the earliest time an egg could have been released.

The copper IUD

• is the most effective method for those who need protection for a year or more
• will prevent:
  • up to 95 per cent if taken within 24 hours
  • up to 90 per cent if taken between 24–72 hours

The Emergency contraceptive pill

• may be effective if you take it after unprotected sex
• may be up to 72 hours (3 days) after

What to do if I become pregnant?

• If you think you could be pregnant, do a pregnancy test as soon as possible. You can buy a test from the first day of a missed period – before this time the level of a hormone (human chorionic gonadotrophin (hCG)) may be too low to show up on a test and you may get a negative result even though you are pregnant. If you don't know when your next period is due, the earliest time to do a test is 21 days after unprotected sex.

• If you are pregnant you need to think about:
  • what you want to do.
  • whether you want to continue with the pregnancy and have the baby
  • whether you want to continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby
  • whether you want to have an abortion
  • whether you want to have the pregnancy and try to bring it to term

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