



**FReHA**

# Methods of Contraception

## Introduction

Although many women are experiencing infertility at this time in age, pregnancy can also happen very easily for some women. Some people believe that first time sex, occasional sex, sex on “safe days”, sex during menstruation or breastfeeding cannot get a woman pregnant. Many couples also believe that withdrawal before ejaculation can prevent pregnancy. We’re here to tell you, that if you’re having unprotected sex, you are at risk of being pregnant; planned or unplanned.

Facts:

Among the 1.9 billion Women of Reproductive Age group (15-49 years) worldwide in 2019, 1.1 billion have a need for family planning, 842 million were using contraceptive methods and 270 million had an unmet need for contraception.

16.7 million unplanned pregnancies happen around the world every year and most could have been prevented with the correct use of contraception.

Use of contraception advances the human right of people to determine the number and spacing of their children.

## Contraceptive methods

Contraception is known as birth control or fertility control. It is important for sexually active individuals to adopt the use of suitable contraception to ensure

they are physically, mentally, emotionally and financially prepared before planning to have a child. There are many different types of contraception, but not all types are suitable for everyone (women in particular) or appropriate for all situations. Factors such as an individual’s overall health, mental stability, frequency of sexual activity, number of sexual partners, background knowledge of sexual partners, desire to have/not have children in the future, present health conditions, family history of diseases and violence need to be taken into account prior to deciding the most appropriate contraceptive method.

Methods of contraception include oral contraceptive pills, injectables, patches, implants, vaginal rings, spermicides, Intra uterine devices, condoms and male and female sterilization. Couples are free to choose the method that suits their needs; with the advice of a health care practitioner. The following outlines some of the available options:

### Oral contraceptive pills (OCPs)

There are two types of oral contraceptive pills; combined oral contraceptives (COCPs) and progestin-only pills (POPs). COCPs consist of estrogen and progestin and works by preventing ovulation (releasing of eggs from the ovaries) and changing the cervical mucus and lining of the uterus. POPs, as its name states, contains only progestin and prevents pregnancy by thickening the cervical mucus, making it difficult for sperm to swim into the uterus or to enter the fallopian tube. A woman takes one pill a day, preferably at the same time each day. Many

types of oral contraceptives are available and a healthcare professional needs to be consulted to determine which type meets the woman's needs. With proper use, this method has an effective rate of 91%.

#### Injectable

Injectable is an injection you get once in every 3 months. It contains progestin which will be released into the bloodstream to thicken the cervical mucus and prevent ovulation. It is safe, convenient and works really well if you get it on a timely manner. You can take the injection whenever you want. If you get your first shot within the first 7 days after the start of your period, you're protected from pregnancy right away. If you get it at any other time in your cycle, you need to use another form of birth control (like a condom) for the first week after getting the injections. Women who choose this method will get shots of the hormone either on the buttocks or arms. This method, if implemented in a timely manner, is 94% effective.

#### Patch

The contraceptive patch is a small sticky patch that releases hormones into a woman's body through the skin to prevent pregnancy. This transdermal contraceptive patch contains hormones such as progestin and estrogen that will be released into the bloodstream. Usually, the patch is worn on the belly, upper arm, buttocks or back. When used correctly, the patch is about 91% effective at preventing pregnancy. It can be worn in the bath, when swimming and while playing sports.

#### Implants

Implants are matchstick-sized, flexible, plastic implantable rods; It is also one of the long-acting reversible contraception. The rod is embedded under the skin of women's upper arm by a healthcare professional. The rod contains progestin and can remain in women's body for up to 5 years. It's known as the "get-it-and-forget-it" birth control but is not permanent. It has a 99% effective rate.

#### Vaginal ring

The vaginal ring (NuvaRing) is a small, soft, plastic ring that a woman places inside her vagina. The ring contains estrogen and progestin which is released in a continuous dose into the bloodstream. The ring is worn inside the vagina and the hormones are absorbed into the body through the vaginal lining. The hormones in the ring stops ovulation and thickens the mucus on the cervix. One ring provides contraception for a month with no interruption to sexual activities. With proper use, this method is 91% effective.

#### Spermicides

Spermicides come in several forms- foam, gel, cream, film, suppository or tablet. They are placed in the vagina no more than an hour before intercourse and are left in place at least 6-8 hours after intercourse. Spermicides can be purchased at drug stores. The use of spermicide alone is only about 70%-80% effective.

#### Intrauterine Device (IUD)

An Intrauterine Device (IUD) is a soft, small T-shaped plastic and copper device that is placed inside the uterus by a doctor as a function to prevent implantation at the wall of uterus. The copper is released to protect against pregnancy for between 3, 5 and 10 years. IUD is one of the long-acting reversible contraception and is sometimes known as a "coil" or "copper coil". If inserted properly, it is about 99% effective against pregnancy. The Paragard (copper) IUD work well as an emergency contraception if it is inserted within 120 hours after unprotected sex.

#### Condoms

Condoms is the ONLY method of contraception that can prevent pregnancy and protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). There are two types of condoms; male condoms (worn on the penis) and female condoms (worn inside the vagina).

### *Male condoms*

Male condoms are thin, stretchy pouches that males wear on their penises. It is a type of barrier method and designed to stop a man's semen from coming into contact with his sexual partner. Only synthetic condoms (latex or plastic) prevent the spread of STIs. It can only be used once and has to be discarded properly. Condoms must be used correctly and consistently during oral, anal or vaginal sex. A condom may be cut at the side, opened and put over the vulva for safer oral sex. Oil-based products such as a moisturiser, lotion and Vaseline can damage latex condoms. Water-based lubricant is safe to use with all condoms. Condoms are easily attainable and is predicted to be 98% effective against pregnancies and STIs. However, this is only attainable if condoms are used correctly and consistently; failing which the effectiveness will only reach 85%.

### *Female condoms*

Female condoms are made from thin, synthetic latex or latex. It is worn inside the vagina to prevent semen (and sperm) from getting into the womb. Female condoms should only be used once and has to be discarded properly. Female condoms come pre-lubricated to make them easier to use. Female condoms must also be used correctly and consistently in order for it to be effective. They may not be suitable for women who are not comfortable touching their genital area.

### *Sterilization*

Sterilization is a permanent method of contraception which either prevents a woman from getting pregnant or a man from releasing sperm. Both must be performed by a health care provider. Doctors often emphasize that sterilization is not reversible because they want to be certain that is it adopted as a temporary contraception method. It is about 99.5%-99.8% effective in ensuring pregnancy does not occur. However, both types of sterilization do not protect against STIs.

### *Female sterilization*

Female sterilization, tubal ligation, is also known as "having your tubes tied" It is a procedure that cuts, ties or seals the fallopian tubes to block the path between the ovaries and the uterus thereby preventing pregnancy from occurring. It is considered a permanent method of contraception because it is very difficult to reverse. It does not affect a woman's hormone levels and monthly menstruation will continue.

### *Male sterilization*

Male sterilization is called vasectomy. It's usually carried out under local anaesthetic and takes about 15 minutes with no pain. The vas deferens will be cut, closed or blocked to block the path between the testes and the urethra and avoid sperm to be released into semen. It can take as long as 3 months for the procedure to be fully effective and a backup method of contraception is used until tests confirm there is no sperm in the semen.

## **Where to begin?**

Before you start on any method of contraception, speak to a health care practitioner. Contact us at the Family Reproductive Health Association (FReHA) to set an appointment and start your journey; safely, comfortable and confidentially with us.

## **Sources**

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