

Birth Control Options Chart

Method	Key Pros	Possible Cons	Failure Rate*
Abstinence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used at any time • Protects against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) • Nothing to purchase • No physical side effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires commitment and self control by both partners • Social pressure to engage in intercourse • Many people fail to use protection when abstinence ends 	0% if used correctly
Contraceptive Implant (Implanon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous pregnancy protection for up to 3 years • Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No STI protection • Minor surgical procedure • Irregular menstrual bleeding • Possible weight gain 	.05%
Levonogestral IUD (Mirena)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous pregnancy protection for up to 5 years • Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No STI protection • Insertion can be painful • May cause irregular bleeding 	.2%
Copper IUD (ParaGard)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous pregnancy protection for up to 12 years • Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No STI protection • Insertion can be painful • May cause heavier periods and cramping 	Between .6% and .8%
Contraceptive Injection (Depo-Provera)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous pregnancy protection for 12 weeks • Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse • Menstruation stops for over half of the women using this method (some may not consider this an advantage) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No STI protection • Requires an injection every 12 weeks • Possible side effects may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Irregular periods, weight gain, headaches • Return to fertility may take several months 	Between .5% and 3%
Vaginal Contraceptive Ring (Nuva Ring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous pregnancy protection for 1 month • Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse • No precise placement necessary • Physiological advantages similar to those of the pill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No STI protection • Requires high level of comfort with one's body • Must remember to remove ring and insert new ring at proper times each month • Cardiovascular health risks similar to the Pill 	Between .5% and 8%
Contraceptive Patch (Ortho Evra)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous pregnancy protection for a week at a time for 1 month • Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No STI protection • Must remember to replace patch every week for 3 weeks and not wear a patch during week 4 • Visible-worn on skin & only available in one color • Slightly less effective for women over 198 pounds • Cardiovascular risks similar to the Pill 	Between .5% and 8%

Method	Key Pros	Possible Cons	Failure Rate*
Birth Control Pills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing to apply or insert at time of intercourse Fertility returns quickly after use is stopped Protects against: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Painful, heavy or irregular periods Ovarian & endometrial cancer Infections of the fallopian tubes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No STI protection Must be taken daily Possible side effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nausea Breast tenderness Weight gain/loss Rare, but serious cardiovascular health risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blood clots Heart attack & stroke <i>These risks are higher for women who are over 35 and smoke</i> 	Between .5% and 8%
Male Condom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects against STIs Protects against pregnancy Available over the counter Inexpensive May help delay ejaculation Male involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May leak/break if used incorrectly May interfere with spontaneity 	Between 2% and 15%
Female Condom (Reality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects against STIs Protects against pregnancy Available over the counter Alternative for people with latex allergies (nitrile) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a high level of comfort with one's body May require practice to insert May become dislodged during intercourse May interfere with spontaneity 	Between 5% and 21%
Withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available as a last resort Nothing to purchase Some pregnancy protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No STI protection Dependent on male partner Requires great control May affect pleasure 	Between 4% and 27%
Emergency Contraception (Plan B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used for up to 120 (5 days) after intercourse Good for emergency situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No STI protection Not for regular use May cause nausea or vomiting 	Reduces pregnancy risk by at least 75%
Spermicide (the Sponge, gel, film, or suppository)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available over the counter Can be used without involving partner in decision No hormonal side-effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No STI protection Possible vaginal irritation Takes practice & comfort with body to use effectively 	18%-29%
Using no birth control method at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No preparation or cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No STI protection Very high chance of pregnancy 	85%-85%

* If a method has a failure rate of 3%, it means that 3 women out of 100 having sexual intercourse regularly for one year are expected to become pregnant while using this method. The first number (smaller number) in the failure rate column is the failure rate of the method if used correctly and consistently. The second number (larger number) in the failure rate column is the failure rate with typical use.

More info at www.plannedparenthood.org/maryland