
Condoms

Effectiveness: Good

Condoms are worn by either the man or woman, and work by preventing sperm from entering the vagina. Condoms are more effective if used in combination with a spermicide.

The female condom is a polyurethane sheath placed inside the vagina. It has two flexible rings at each end of it. It is inserted into the vagina with its closed end high inside and the larger, open end just outside the labia.

The male condom is a latex sheath worn over the penis.

Spermicide

Effectiveness: Fair

A spermicide comes in various forms: gels, film, foam, and suppositories. It works by killing sperm.

Vaginal contraceptive film (VCF) is a square of hardened gel to be inserted high into the vagina. Your body heat will melt the film so the spermicide can disperse.

Contraceptive foam appears similar to mousse. It is inserted into the vagina, close to the cervix, with an applicator.

Gel can be inserted into the vagina either with or without an applicator, or directly into a condom.

Emergency Contraception

Effectiveness: Excellent

In the event of unprotected sex---failure of a birth control method, using no method, etc.---there are two other methods which can prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

The Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) can be used up to 72 hours after unprotected sex. There are various types of ECP; generally there will be two doses of pills 12 hours apart. The first dose must be taken within the 72-hour time limit. The pills work by preventing fertilization or implantation of a fertilized egg in the wall of the uterus.

An IUD (intra-uterine device) can be inserted up to seven days after unprotected sex. This will kill any sperm in the uterus. The IUD can then remain in place and work as a regular method of birth control.

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(Updated March 2, 2009)



Birth Control Methods

This brochure is a general overview of contraceptive methods currently available in Canada.

All methods of birth control have various side effects not detailed here.

Complete information can be obtained from your health care provider or local family planning clinic.

Sterilization

Effectiveness: Excellent

For women, a tubal ligation involves cutting and tying her fallopian tubes so her eggs cannot reach the uterus to be fertilized. Menstrual cycles will be unaffected.

For a man, a vasectomy involves cutting and tying his vas deferens so that sperm cannot be ejaculated. Sperm takes up only around 1% of semen, so the amount he releases will remain the same after surgery. A local anaesthetic is used.

Norplant

Effectiveness: Excellent

Progestin is released continuously into the body via six capsules which are inserted under the skin of the upper arm. Ovulation is inhibited and cervical mucous is thickened, preventing sperm from reaching the egg. The capsules work for five years, but can be removed earlier if desired.

Depo Provera

Effectiveness: Excellent

Depo Provera contains progestin which is administered by injection in the arm or buttocks every 12 weeks. It prevents ovulation and thickens cervical mucous.

Birth Control Pill

Effectiveness: Excellent

The pill uses estrogen and progesterone to prevent ovulation. The pill must be taken at the same time every day. Mini pills, which only contain Progestin, work by thickening the cervical mucous to block sperm from reaching the egg and thinning the lining of the uterus. Ovulation may also be inhibited.

IUD (intra-uterine device)

Effectiveness: Excellent

The IUD is a small, copper-coated device which sits inside the uterus. It works by destroying sperm before they fertilize the egg. Depending on the brand, the IUD can remain inside a woman's body for up to 10 years.

Diaphragm

Effectiveness: Good

The latex diaphragm holds spermicidal gel up against the cervix and also acts as a barrier to sperm. The diaphragm must be fitted by a physician.

Cervical Cap

Effectiveness: Good

The rubber cap fits tightly over the cervix via suction. It stops sperm from reaching the cervix. The cap must be fitted by a physician.

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