

# Contraception Methods

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## External condom (Male condom)

### Cost:

Prices vary by brand and varieties, but cost about \$1 per condom on average

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 82%

Perfect use: 98%

### Requires doctor:

No

### Use:

Unroll the condom over the length of the penis before having sex. After ejaculation, carefully remove the condom without spilling the semen inside, and dispose (do not flush!). Never reuse external condoms.

For use as a dental dam, cut off the tip, and cut down the side of the condom so that it unrolls into a flat sheet instead of a tube. Discard after use.

### Pros:

- Easily accessible
- May be available for free at clinics, schools, and community organizations
- Will protect against blood-borne STIs, as well as some STIs that are spread via skin-to-skin contact
- Can be combined with almost every other form of contraception

### Cons:

- May break or slip off during intercourse, especially if the wrong condom size is used or if the penis loses its erection
- Ineffective if used improperly, or if the condom is expired or otherwise compromised
- Since it must be applied on an erect penis, some people dislike that it interrupts the flow and spontaneity of sex
- Most are made of latex, but latex-free condoms are available for people who are allergic to latex
- Some people may consider condoms to be wasteful and not environmentally friendly

## Combined Oral Contraceptive (Pill)

### Cost:

\$15 per pack

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 91%

Perfect use: 99.7%

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

Packs come with enough pills for one month: 21 hormone pills and sometimes 7 sugar pills. A pill must be taken at the same time every day. Effects of missing a pill vary with the brand of pill.

### Pros:

- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- May reduce the flow and severity of periods

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Some people have difficulty remembering to take the pill every day
- Possible side effects: nausea, bloating, mood swings, weight gain, hair loss, increased risk of blood clots, irregular periods, may worsen depression and PMS symptoms, may weaken bone density
  - Different brands of the pill may have different side effects as there is a variety of brands that deliver different hormones
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Progestin-only Contraceptive (Pill, Minipill)

### Cost:

\$17 per pack

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 91%

Perfect use: 99.7%

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

Packs come with enough pills for one month: either 21 hormone pills and 7 sugar pills, or just the 21 hormone pills. A pill must be taken at the same time every day. Effects of missing a pill vary with the brand of pill.

### Pros:

- Contains less hormones than the Combination Pill, so people who experience severe side effects may not experience them with the Minipill
- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- May reduce the flow and severity of periods

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Some people have difficulty remembering to take the pill every day
- Possible side effects: Nausea, bloating, mood swings, weight gain, hair loss, irregular periods, may worsen depression and PMS symptoms, may weaken bone density
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Patch (Evra)

### Cost:

\$25 for 3

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 91%

Perfect use: 99.7%

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

Apply a new patch on bare skin once per week for 3 weeks. During the fourth week, no patch is applied to allow menstruation to occur

### Pros:

- Only needs to be replaced once a week, which may be easier for some people to remember than a daily pill
- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- May fall off while exercising, sweating, or swimming
- Possible side effects: Increased risk of blood clots, skin irritation at application site, headaches, weight gain.
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Shot (Depo-Provera)

### Cost:

\$35-40 per injection

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 94%

Perfect use: 99.95%

### Timing:

One injection every 10-13 weeks, or roughly 4 times a year

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

A doctor administers the injection once every 10-13 weeks, or roughly 4 times a year

### Pros:

- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- Going in to a doctor's office 4 times a year may be easier for some people to remember than a daily pill
  - A doctor's office may help keep up with the protection by making appointments in advance
- May be more discrete than other methods since everything is done at the doctor's office and there is no packaging to dispose of

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Possible side effects: weight gain, irregular periods, may worsen depression and PMS symptoms, may weaken bone density
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Ring (NuvaRing)

### Cost:

\$25 for 1 month's supply

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 91%

Perfect use: 99.7%

### Timing:

Once a month

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

A flexible plastic ring that is inserted into the vagina, and removed after 3 weeks. A new ring is inserted one week after the last ring was removed to allow menstruation to occur.

### Pros:

- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
  - May be removed safely for up to 3 hours if it does
- Only needs to be removed/inserted once every three weeks, which may be easier for some people to remember than a daily pill

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Possible side effects: Increased risk of vaginal infection, headaches, increased vaginal discharge, nausea, weight gain, irritation from ring
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Copper IUD

### Cost:

\$65-\$200 (price may vary by location and availability of brands)

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 99.2%

Perfect use: 99.4%

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

Inserted into the uterus by a doctor, effective for up to 10 years

### Pros:

- Contains no hormones, so Copper IUD users do not experience side effects like weight gain, moodiness, hair loss, etc. due to hormones
- Effective for a long time, so it's well-suited for people who would prefer to not worry about birth control
- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- May be more discrete than other methods since everything is done at the doctor's office and there is no packaging to dispose of
- The copper IUD is a non-hormonal method of contraception that is suitable for women who cannot or are unwilling to deal with the side effects of hormonal methods

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Possible side effects: Cramping and light bleeding (spotting) in the first few months after insertion
- May increase flow and severity of cramping during periods
- May be expelled in the first few months after insertion
- Some people consider the insertion process to be invasive, and it is usually painful

## Hormonal IUD (Mirena)

### Cost:

\$350

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 99.8%

Perfect use: 99.9%

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

Inserted into the uterus by a doctor, effective for up to 5 years

### Pros:

- The IUD delivers hormones directly into the uterus, so there is overall less of the hormones in the rest of the body as compared to the pill, injection, and patch
- May diminish the flow and severity of periods; approximately 1/3 of Mirena users stop getting their periods entirely
- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- May be more discrete than other methods since everything is done at the doctor's office and there is no packaging to dispose of

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Possible side effects: Cramping and light bleeding (spotting) in the first few months after insertion
- May be expelled in the first few months after insertion
- Some people consider the insertion process to be invasive, and it is usually painful
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Hormonal IUD (Jaydess)

### Cost:

\$300

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 99.6%

Perfect use: 99.9%

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

Inserted into the uterus by a doctor, effective for up to 3 years

### Pros:

- The IUD delivers hormones directly into the uterus, so there is overall less of the hormones in the rest of the body as compared to the pill, injection, and patch
- May diminish the flow and severity of periods
- Contains less hormones than the Mirena, so may be suitable for users who experience undesirable hormonal side effects from Mirena
- Does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- May be more discrete than other methods since everything is done at the doctor's office and there is no packaging to dispose of

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- Possible side effects: Cramping and light bleeding (spotting) in the first few months after insertion.
- May be expelled in the first few months after insertion.
- Not recommended for women who smoke and are over 35, have a history of breast/uterine cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, or stroke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease or are allergic to hormones

## Internal condom (Female condom)

### Cost:

\$15 for box of 3

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 79%

Perfect use: 95%

### Requires doctor:

No

### Use:

Insert into the vagina or anus before sex; a flexible plastic ring is included with internal condoms to aid insertion into the vagina. For anal sex, discard the plastic insertion ring. After ejaculation, carefully remove the condom and dispose. Never reuse internal condoms.

For use as a dental dam, discard the plastic insertion ring. Then cut off the closed end, and cut down the side of the condom so that it becomes a flat sheet instead of a tube. Place over the opening of the vagina or anus for protection during oral sex. Discard after use.

### Pros:

- May be inserted well before intercourse (up to eight hours) so that it does not interrupt or interfere with sex
- Can be used by people with latex allergies
- Can be purchased in drugstores and some supermarkets
- Does not require an erect penis to use
- Will protect against blood-borne STIs, as well as some STIs that are spread via skin-to-skin contact
- Can be combined with almost every other form of contraception

### Cons:

- May shift or slip into the vagina/anus during sex
- May be more difficult to find than external condoms
- Ineffective if used improperly, or if the condom is expired or otherwise compromised
- Some people may consider condoms to be wasteful and not environmentally friendly

## Diaphragm

### Cost:

\$60-\$100 (plus \$8 for 20-40 applications of spermicide)

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 84%

Perfect use: 94%

### Timing:

Must be inserted every instance of sexual intercourse, reusable for up to 2 years

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

A doctor measures the size and shape of the vagina and cervix to determine the correct size of the diaphragm. Use with spermicidal cream/jelly. Insert into the vagina so that it completely covers the cervix. Keep the cap inside the vagina for at least 6 hours after ejaculation. The diaphragm may be kept inside the vagina for up to 24 hours. Wash with mild soap and warm water, and air dry.

### Pros:

- Reusable
- Can be inserted for up to 6 hours before sex so that it does not interrupt the flow and spontaneity of sex
- Non-hormonal method that is suitable for women who cannot use hormonal methods

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- May cause vaginal irritation and an increased risk of bladder infection.
- May be painful or cause discomfort if it is too large or improperly positioned
- May be difficult to insert correctly
- May be pushed out of place during intercourse
- May need to be refitted after pregnancy of significant weight change

## Cervical cap

### Cost:

\$125 (plus \$8 for 20-40 applications of spermicide)

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 84% (68% after first childbirth)

Perfect use: 91% (74% after first childbirth)

### Timing:

Must be inserted every instance of sexual intercourse, reusable for up to 2 years

### Requires doctor:

Yes

### Use:

A doctor will examine and discuss with the patient to determine which size is most suitable.

Use with spermicidal jelly. Insert into the vagina so that it completely covers the cervix. Keep the cap inside the vagina for at least 6 hours after ejaculation. The cap may be kept inside the vagina for up to 48 hours. Wash with mild soap and warm water, and allow the cap to air dry between uses.

### Pros:

- Reusable
- Can be inserted for up to 6 hours before sex so that it does not interrupt the flow and spontaneity of sex
- Non-hormonal method that is suitable for women who cannot use hormonal methods

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- May cause vaginal irritation and an increased risk of bladder infection
- May be painful or cause discomfort if it is too large or improperly positioned
- May be pushed out of place during intercourse

## Sponge

### Cost:

\$15 for a package of 3 (prices may vary depending on location)

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 84% (68% after first childbirth)

Perfect use: 91% (74% after first childbirth)

### Timing:

Every instance of sexual intercourse

### Requires doctor:

No

### Use:

Wet the sponge and squeeze once or twice to activate the spermicide in the sponge. Insert into the vagina so that it covers the cervix completely. Keep the sponge inside the vagina for at least 6 hours after ejaculation. The sponge may be kept inside the vagina for up to 30 hours. Do not reuse sponges.

### Pros:

- Non-hormonal method of contraception that is suitable for women who cannot use hormonal methods
- Can be inserted for up to 6 hours before sex so that it does not interrupt the flow and spontaneity

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- May cause vaginal irritation and an increased risk of bladder infection and toxic shock syndrome
- Some women find it difficult to remove the sponge, or may forget to remove it

## Spermicide

### Cost:

About \$8 for foam and gel applicator kits, \$4-\$8 for refills. Large cans of foam contain about 20-40 applications. Film and pills are about \$8.

### Effectiveness:

Typical use: 71%

Perfect use: 82%

### Timing:

Every instance of sexual intercourse

### Requires doctor:

No

### Use:

Comes in the form of foam, cream, gel, pills, or film. The spermicide must be inserted vaginally before every instance of intercourse. Some types of spermicide may require a 10-minute waiting period between insertion and intercourse. Do not douche for 6-8 hours after ejaculation.

### Pros:

- Non-hormonal method that is suitable for women who cannot use hormonal methods

### Cons:

- Does not protect against STIs
- May cause vaginal and penis irritation, and an increased risk of bladder infection.
- Some may find spermicides too messy to use

## The Implant (Implanon/Nexplanon)

Currently not available in Canada