
















Protection Methods Chart

	Type of Method	Method Description	How Well Does it Work?*	Where can you get the method?	Benefits (Pros)	Possible Side Effects (Cons) (not all are listed)
Delaying Sex/ Abstinence		To not have sex or to delay having sex until a later date.	100% if used consistently	Don't have to go anywhere to get this method.	Does not require prescription. Free. Protects against HIV and STIs.	None.
External Condom		Covers the penis with a thin layer of latex or polyurethane that acts as a barrier between partners. Cannot be reused. Can be used with all other methods.	82-98%*	Drugstores, health centers, school nurses and supermarkets.	Can buy at many stores. Free at many health centers. Can help prevent early ejaculation. Protects against HIV and many STIs.	Can break or slip off. May irritate someone with a latex allergy.
Internal Condom		Made of Nitrile (latex-free material). Inserted into the vagina or anus. Acts as a barrier between partners. Cannot be reused. Can be used with all other methods.	79-95%*	Prescribed by health care provider, covered by most insurances.	Good for people with latex allergy. Protects against HIV and other STIs.	May slip out of place during vaginal or anal intercourse. May be difficult to insert.
Copper IUD (intrauterine device)		The Copper IUD is a small plastic and copper device that is inserted into the uterus. The IUD changes the environment of the uterus so that sperm and egg cannot meet. The IUD may be left in place for 12 years. Can also be used as emergency contraception.	99.2-99.8%*	A health care provider must prescribe, insert, and remove.	No medicine to remember. Lasts a long time.	May increase cramping and cause heavier and longer periods. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.
Progestin IUD (intrauterine device)		The hormonal IUD is a small plastic device that is inserted into the uterus. It contains Progestin. The IUD changes the environment of the uterus so that sperm and egg cannot meet. The IUD is effective for up to 4-6 years depending on the brand.†	99.2-99.8%*	A health care provider must prescribe, insert, and remove.	No medicine to remember. May improve period cramps and bleeding. Lasts a long time.	May cause breakthrough bleeding. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs. May cause irregular bleeding.
The Implant		The implant is a matchstick-sized plastic rod that is put under the skin of the arm. It contains Progestin, which prevents ovulation and thickens cervical mucus which prevents sperm from reaching an egg. The implant is effective for up to 4 years.	99.9%*	A health care provider must prescribe, insert, and remove.	No medicine to remember. Lasts a long time.	After 1 year of use, many have no period. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.
The Shot		The shot is an injection that contains the hormone Progestin, which prevents the release of an egg and thickens cervical mucus. The shot must be injected every 3 months.	91-99.9%*	A health care provider must prescribe and inject.	Private. No daily, monthly, or weekly medicine to remember.	May cause spotting, no period, or weight gain. Side effects may last up to 6 months after stopping shots. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.
The Pill		The pill contains hormones (Progestin and often Estrogen) that prevent the release of an egg and thicken cervical mucus. The pill must be taken at the same time each day.	91-99.7%*	A health care provider must prescribe.	Some pills may make periods more regular and less painful.	May cause spotting for the first 1-2 months. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.

Protection Methods Chart Continued

	Type of Method	Method Description	How Well Does it Work?*	Where can you get the method?	Benefits (Pros)	Possible Side Effects (Cons) (not all are listed)
The Patch		The patch sticks to the skin, and contains Progestin and Estrogen that are absorbed through the skin. These prevent the release of an egg and thicken cervical mucus. A new patch is applied once a week for three weeks, followed by a patch-free fourth week.	91-99.7%*	A health care provider must prescribe.	Can make periods more regular and less painful. No pill to take daily.	Can irritate skin under the patch. May cause spotting the first 1-2 months. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.
The Ring		The ring is a small vinyl acetate ring that is inserted into the vagina. The ring contains Progestin and Estrogen, which prevent the release of an egg and thicken cervical mucus. The ring is inserted for three weeks, and then removed for one ring-free fourth week.	91-99.7%*	A health care provider must prescribe.	Can make periods more regular and less painful. No pill to take daily.	Can increase vaginal discharge. May cause spotting the first 1-2 months of use. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.
Emergency Contraception (EC)		Emergency contraception pills are designed to prevent pregnancy after unprotected vaginal intercourse. EC can prevent the release of an egg and thicken cervical mucus. The copper IUD is 99% effective as EC if placed within 5 days of unprotected sex.	Plan B®, generic brands: 75-89% if taken within 3 days after unprotected sex† ella®: 85% up to 5 days after unprotected sex†	Plan B®, generic brands: All ages, no prescription required. ella®: Requires prescription from health care provider.	Available at pharmacies, health centers, or health care providers.	May cause stomach upset or nausea. Next period may come early or late. May cause spotting. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.
Diaphragm and Cervical Cap		The diaphragm and cervical cap are barrier methods that cover the cervix to prevent the sperm from reaching an egg. These must be used with a spermicide. Diaphragm and cervical cap must be inserted with each intercourse.	Diaphragm: 81-94%* Cervical cap: 79.5- 90.5%*	A health care provider must prescribe and size the diaphragm and cervical cap.	Can last several years. Costs very little to use.	Can be difficult to use. May cause irritation if allergic to latex, silicone, or spermicide. Does NOT reduce the risk of HIV. May reduce the risk of some infections.
Spermicide (cream, gel, sponge, foam, inserts, film)		Spermicides are inserted into the vagina before intercourse. Spermicides kill sperm. Spermicide must be inserted before each intercourse.	71-85%* May raise the risk of getting HIV.	Drugstores, doctor's offices, health centers and supermarkets.	Can buy at many stores. Comes in many forms. Can be put in as part of foreplay.	May irritate the skin of the vagina, penis, or anus. Can be messy. May raise the risk of HIV/STIs.
Dental Dam		The dental dam is a thin layer of latex, plastic, or polyurethane that acts as a barrier between partners when placed over the vulva (outside of vagina) or anus during oral sex. Can also use a condom cut in half. A new dental dam must be used each time.	This device is used for oral sex only. Protects against HIV and other STIs.	Drugstores, doctor's offices, health centers and condom shops.	Protects against HIV and other STIs.	May irritate someone with a latex allergy. Dental dam may slip out of place if not held around the area receiving oral sex.
Permanent Birth Control: Laparoscopic Tubal Ligation, Vasectomy		Permanent birth control is a procedure performed by a doctor that is intended to prevent the sperm from joining the egg by blocking either the fallopian tubes (carry an egg) or the vas deferens (carry the sperm).	Two of the most common types are Laparoscopic Tubal Ligation & Vasectomy: 99.5-99.9%* Talk to a health care provider about other options.	A health care provider must prescribe and perform these procedures.	Private. No medicine to remember.	Mild bleeding or infection may occur right after the operation, reaction to anesthetic, reversibility cannot be guaranteed. Does NOT protect against HIV or STIs.