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Birth Control



Birth control is a way to prevent unplanned pregnancy. There are many types of birth control such as the pill, skin patch, vaginal ring, injection, intrauterine device, and implant. Most of them are easy to use and work well if used correctly and regularly as directed. Each form has its pros and cons. Before choosing a birth control method it is important to think about your overall health, the number of sex partners you have, how often you have sex, how well each method works to prevent pregnancy, potential side effects, when you want to have children in the future, and your level of comfort with using a certain form of birth control. The condom is still the only method of birth control that also provides protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

BIRTH CONTROL METHODS INCLUDE

Combined Estrogen-Progestin Pill: You must swallow a pill every day. Side effects: Bleeding between periods, decreased bleeding during period, changes in mood, and nausea. Rare but serious risks: Heart attack, blood clots, stroke, high blood pressure, gallstones, liver tumors, and yellowing of the skin or eyes.

Progestin-only Pill: You must swallow a pill at the same time every day. Side effects: Bleeding between periods, acne, and sore breasts. Advantages: In addition to preventing pregnancy, oral contraceptives may also control heavy menstrual bleeding and cramping, reduce pelvic pain, and reduce symptoms of premenstrual dysphoric disorder.

Skin Patch: You must wear a patch on your skin all the time for 3 weeks. Every week you change the patch. During the fourth week, you go without a patch. Side effects: Similar to those of the combined pill but with a higher risk of blood clots. Some women may have skin irritation where the patch is applied.

Vaginal Ring: Must be placed into the vagina and left in for 3 weeks. During the fourth week, you go without a ring. Possible side effects are similar to those of the combined pill. Other possible side effects include vaginal discharge or irritation.

Injection: Your doctor or nurse must give you shot every 3 months. Side effects: Bleeding between

periods or regular periods may stop, weight gain, hair loss or increased hair on face or body, loss of bone density, mood changes, sore breasts, and headache.

Intrauterine Device (IUD): Must be inserted into your uterus by a doctor. Once the IUD is inserted there is nothing to do or remember. Lasts up to 3-5 years depending on the type. Side effects: Bleeding between periods or regular periods may stop, and cramps. Uncommon risks: IUD can slip out, damage the uterus, can cause a type of infection that can make it difficult to get pregnant after the IUD is removed.

Progestin Implant: Must be inserted under the skin of the upper arm by a doctor. Once the implant is inserted there is nothing to do or remember. Lasts up to 3 years. Side effects: Bleeding between or change in periods, headache, weight gain, acne, sore breasts, and mood changes.

CHOOSING THE APPROPRIATE FORM OF BIRTH CONTROL

The best form of birth control is the one that matches your lifestyle, needs, and that you will use in the proper manner. You also will want to think about the benefits, side effects, and risks. Work with your osteopathic family doctor (DO) to choose the best option for you. If you have any questions your family physician will be able to answer them for you. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor right away.

Source(s): CDC, Department of Health and Human Services, HormonalContraception.gov, and [UpToDate](http://UpToDate.com).

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