

What Is Emergency Contraception?

The terms “morning-after pill” and “Plan B” refer to two over-the-counter pills taken together for emergency contraception. If you take them within 72 hours of having unprotected sex, you have an 89 to 95 percent chance of avoiding pregnancy. The sooner you take them, the better. Side effects may include nausea, vomiting, dizziness and bleeding.



WHAT ABOUT STIs?

When you have sex, you are at risk for getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). You can get STIs from vaginal, anal or oral sex. Condoms are the only type of birth control that help prevent STIs. Other contraceptives are more effective at preventing pregnancy, so you may want to use a condom also.



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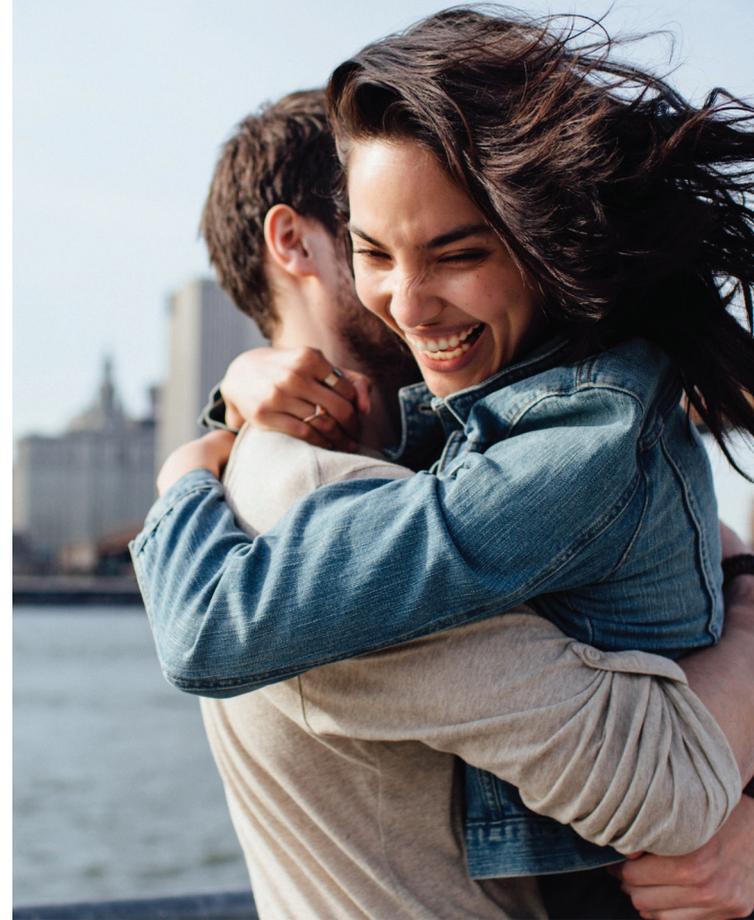
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ABOUT BIRTH
CONTROL



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Choosing a Birth Control Method

There are many options when it comes to birth control. The right method for you will depend on what you and your partner are comfortable with.

Some contraceptives are easy to use, but not as good at preventing pregnancy. Others are more expensive and require planning ahead, but they are more effective. Be realistic when considering what will work best for you.

Effective? Over-the-counter contraceptives, like condoms and sponges, are affordable and convenient, but only about 80% effective in preventing pregnancy.

Effort? Consider whether you're willing to insert a sperm-blocking device inside your body before having sex.

Affordable? Can you keep up with the cost? Will you and your partner share the cost?

Side effects? Some birth control methods are very effective but might cause stronger PMS symptoms or other discomfort.

Reversible? If you plan to get pregnant some day, some contraceptives are easier to stop than others.

Prevent STDs? Only condoms provide reliable protection from sexually transmitted diseases. You may want to use more than one birth control method.

Compatible with your beliefs? Consider any personal values that guide the contraceptives you can use.



HOW DOES BIRTH CONTROL WORK?

Understanding how different types of birth control work can help you decide which method is best for you.

Hormonal methods: The most common method of hormonal birth control is the pill. It prevents an egg from being released from the ovaries each month. Patches, injections, rings and implants work the same way. Other hormonal methods—including progestin-only pills or hormonal intrauterine devices (IUDs)—cause the cervical mucus to thicken. This makes it hard for sperm to pass through.

Barrier methods: These methods of birth control prevent sperm from entering the uterus. Examples include condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps and sponges.

Natural family planning: The calendar or rhythm method, the cervical mucus method, and the body temperature method are ways to predict when an egg is released from the ovaries. Timing when an egg can be fertilized helps you know when to avoid unprotected sex.



Other options: Other ways to avoid getting pregnant include avoiding sex (abstinence) or sterilization. The sterilization surgery for men is called vasectomy. For women, the surgical procedure is called tubal ligation. There are also non-surgical options for women. Sterilization is usually permanent.

COMPARING SOME OPTIONS

METHOD	EFFECTIVENESS PREVENTING PREGNANCY	PROTECTS AGAINST STIS?
ABSTINENCE	100%	YES
HORMONAL IUD	99+%	NO
PILL OR HORMONE PATCH	91–92%	NO
MALE CONDOM	82%	YES, MOST
CONTRACEPTIVE SPONGE	76%–88%	NO
FEMALE CONDOM	79%	YES, MOST