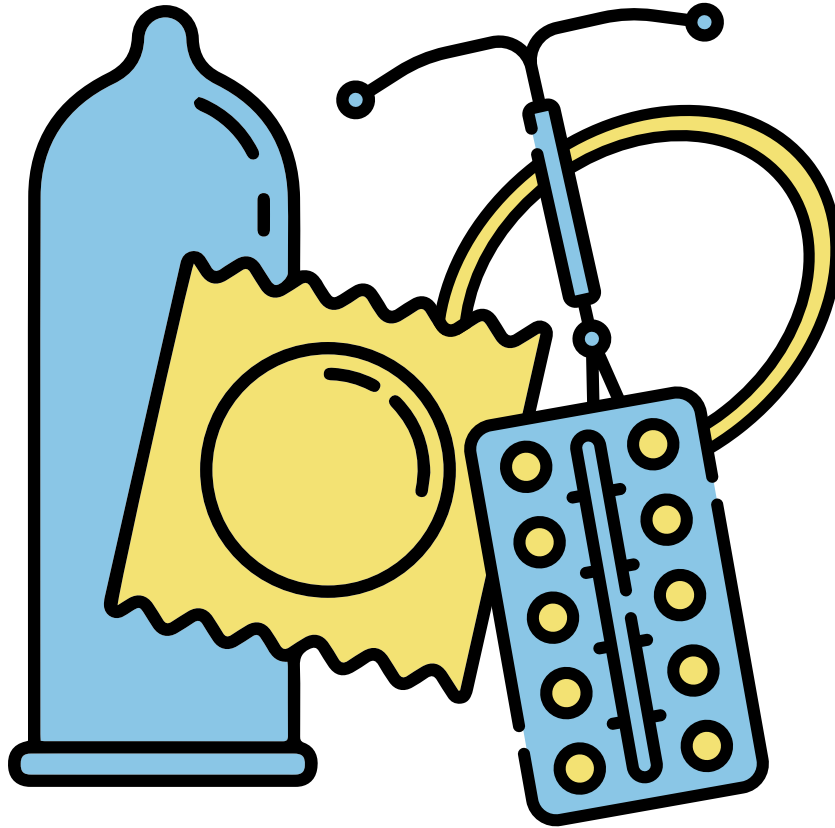


# Birth Control



This information sheet is about making choices about birth control and pregnancy.

*Financial contribution from*



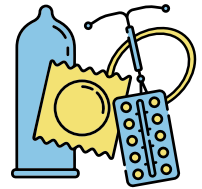
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**sieccan**  
Sex Information & Education Council of Canada  
Conseil d'information & d'éducation sexuelles du Canada

## What is birth control?

If you and the person you are having sex with do not want to get pregnant, there are some things you can do to not get pregnant. We call these things “birth control” or “contraceptives.”



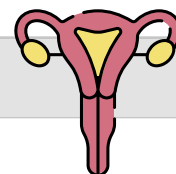
Check out [Birth Control Methods: Information Sheet](#) for more information about what pregnancy is and how pregnancy can happen.



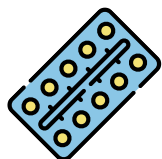
The method of birth control you choose is a personal decision and may be different from what others suggest. You can always change your mind. Speak to your health care provider about the possible benefits and potential risks of different birth control methods.

# Birth control options

There are hormonal and non-hormonal birth control options.

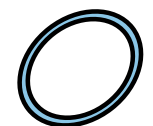
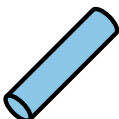
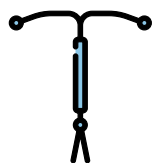


## Hormonal birth control



### *If you have a uterus and ovaries:*

- **Birth control pills:** a very effective method for preventing pregnancy. The pill works by preventing ovulation (i.e., when an egg is released from the ovaries) and thickening the lining of the cervix, which blocks sperm from getting through. People who take the pill have a slightly higher risk for breast, cervical and liver cancers, as well as heart disease and stroke. There are many different types of birth control pills you can take.
- **An IUD (intrauterine device):** usually a small T-shaped object that the health care provider puts into your uterus from the vagina. There are many different types of IUDs.
- **The implant:** a small object that the health care provider puts underneath the skin of your arm.
- **The shot:** an injection you can get every 3 months.
- **The patch:** a sticker that you stick on your butt, arm, stomach, or back once a week.
- **The ring:** a small ring you put into your vagina once a month.



The insertion of some birth control methods (e.g., IUD) can be painful. Talk to your health care provider before your appointment to see what pain management options exist (e.g., using a numbing gel or taking a painkiller in advance).

In rare cases, some birth control methods (i.e., the implant or the IUD) can move out of place. If you think this has happened to you, it's important to book an appointment with a health care provider.

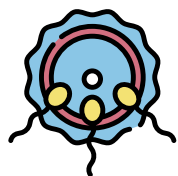
## Hormonal birth control

The hormones in birth control can cause side effects for some people, though this isn't the case for everyone — many people do not experience any issues.

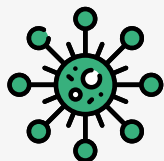
Side effects can include:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Breast tenderness
- Mood changes
- Changes in periods (e.g., early, late, or no periods)
- Spotting (bleeding in between periods or brown discharge).

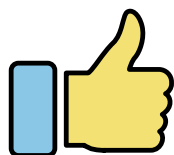
Birth control shouldn't make you feel unwell. If you are experiencing pain or discomfort, talk to your health care provider. It can take trying out a few options before finding the one that is best for you.



**Remember that if you stop using birth control, there is a chance you can get pregnant. If you want to get pregnant in the future, but not right now, you can use birth control. You can stop taking birth control when you want to get pregnant.**

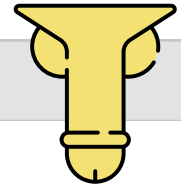


It is important to note that hormonal birth control methods do not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

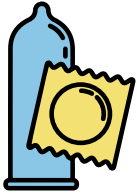


Birth control can also be prescribed for things other than preventing pregnancy, such as acne, painful periods, endometriosis or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

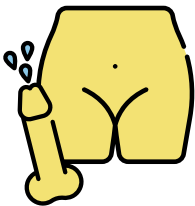
## Non-hormonal birth control



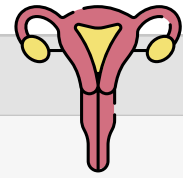
### *If you have a penis:*



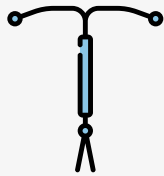
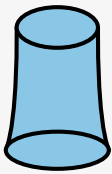
- **The external condom:** When condoms are used correctly every time you have sex, they are an effective form of birth control. The condom goes on the outside of your penis each time you have sex. Wearing a condom will also help protect you and the person you are having sex with from getting a sexually transmitted infection.
- Some disabled people (like people with spina bifida) have latex allergies and should use non-latex condoms.
- If you need help putting on a condom, you can ask your partner for help.
- Check out SIECCAN's sexual health information sheet: [Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\): Information Sheet](#) for more information about using condoms.



- **Withdrawal or “pulling out”:** This is when the person with a penis pulls their penis out of a person’s vagina before they ejaculate. When a person with a penis ejaculates, a liquid that contains sperm cells comes out of the penis. These sperm cells could get someone with a uterus and ovaries pregnant.
- Withdrawal or pull-out will reduce the chances of the person with a uterus and ovaries getting pregnant, but it is **not** an effective method of birth control compared to using condoms or other birth control methods. For example: a person might not be able to tell when they are about to ejaculate or might not pull out their penis in time.



## Non-hormonal birth control



### *If you have a uterus and ovaries:*

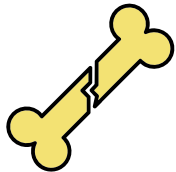
- **The internal condom:** Condom that goes inside the vagina (or inside the rectum (butthole)).
  - Check out SIECCAN's sexual health information sheet: [Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\): Information Sheet](#) for more information about using the internal condom.
- **A copper IUD:** A non-hormonal IUD wrapped in copper that is placed inside the uterus to prevent pregnancy.
- **Spermicide:** A product (e.g., cream, gel, thin sheet) with chemicals that stop sperm from reaching an egg. Spermicides are not the most effective form of birth control, and should be used with another birth control method (e.g., condom).

If you are intersex or transgender and not sure what hormonal or non-hormonal birth control methods are best for you, talk to a trusted health care provider.

**It is important to note that hormonal and non-hormonal methods are not 100% effective in preventing pregnancy (e.g., condoms are 98% effective when used correctly).**

**Your disability could affect which birth control method to take/use. Talk to your health care provider about how your disability or any medications you take might impact which birth control method you can take.**

**For example:**



If your bones are fragile or if you are more likely to have blood clots, there are some types of birth control methods you should **not** take. Ask your health care provider about this.



If you are allergic to latex, use condoms/dental dams that are not made with latex (non-latex condoms/dental dams).



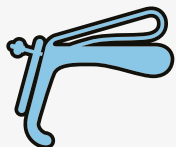
If you have sensory sensitivities (e.g., taste, smell, touch, noise) that make using condoms uncomfortable, you can try different flavoured condoms, use lube with condoms, or use noise-cancelling headphones/earplugs during sex with a condom.



If you are taking other medication, you might not be able to take the birth control pill at the same time. Ask your health care provider if you can take the birth control pill at the same time as the other medication you are already taking.



If swallowing is hard for you, it might be difficult to take the birth control pill.



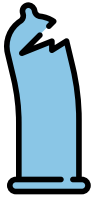
If having a speculum put into your vagina is difficult, then you might not want to get an IUD.



If doing things with your hands is hard, you might need help from someone to use certain birth control methods like putting on a condom, taking the birth control pill, or using a vaginal ring or the patch.

# Emergency Contraception

## Emergency contraception can be used to prevent pregnancy if one of these things happen:



The condom breaks during sex **and** you and the person you are having sex with are not using any other kind of birth control.



You and the person you are having sex with are not using condoms or any other form of birth control, or forgot to take or change their birth control, **and** the person with the penis ejaculates into the vagina.



You have been sexually assaulted **and** a condom was not used. Sexual assault is when someone forces you to do a sexual activity with them that you did not consent to.

Check out SIECCAN's [Protecting Yourself from Abuse: Information Sheet](#) for more information about sexual assault and what to do if you have been abused.

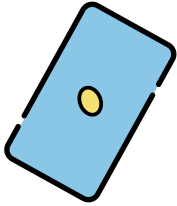
If any of these things happen **and** you and the person you are having sex with do not want to get pregnant, Emergency Contraception can be used by the person with the uterus and ovaries to prevent pregnancy.



## There are two kinds of Emergency Contraception:

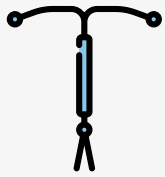
### **Emergency Contraception (EC, or the ‘morning-after’) pill:**

You can take the Emergency Contraception pill up to 5 days after having sex, but it works best if you take it 1 to 3 days after having sex.



You can buy the Emergency Contraception pill at a pharmacy or get it at a clinic or doctors' office. Some Emergency Contraception pills are impacted by a person's weight; talk to your pharmacist about the right option for you.

The Emergency Contraception pill can be expensive. There are options to reduce the costs, such as buying off brand or asking your local sexual health centre if they provide it for free.



### **Copper IUD:**

You can see a health care provider between 1 and 7 days after you have sex to get a copper IUD. The copper IUD is also an effective method of birth control.