



Contraception

You can use different methods of contraception to prevent pregnancy when you have vaginal sex with a man. You have the right to use contraception and choose a method that works best for you.

Why do you need contraception?

When you have vaginal sex with a man, his sperm may fertilise your egg, which can cause pregnancy. If you don't want to get pregnant, you can use contraception.

Types of contraception

No form of contraception is 100% effective. Every method has its advantages and disadvantages. There are many things to consider when choosing a contraception method. For example, its effectiveness, the cost, how easy it is to use and your stage of life.

The most effective methods of contraception are listed below.

Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)

LARC is a highly effective method of contraception. The other advantage is you don't have to think about contraception every day or every time you have sex.

Hormonal implant (Implanon®)

Hormonal implants are over 99% effective. A doctor or nurse inserts a small implant under the skin of your upper arm. The implant releases the progestogen hormone, which stops ovulation. The implant lasts for three years.

Hormonal injection (Depo Provera)

Hormonal injections are over 96% effective. A doctor or nurse gives you an injection of the progestogen hormone every 12 weeks, which stops ovulation.

Intrauterine device (IUD)

IUDs are over 99% effective. Hormonal IUDs are slightly more effective than copper ones. A doctor or nurse inserts the IUD (a small t-shaped device) into your uterus through your vagina, which stops sperm from reaching the egg. Hormonal IUDs (Mirena® or Kyleena®) last for five years. Copper IUDs last for five to 10 years.

The Pill (oral contraception)

The Pill is over 93% effective. You need to take a pill around the same time every day to prevent pregnancy. There are two main types of oral contraception:

- the combined oral contraceptive pill, which contains oestrogen and progesterone hormones
- the progesterone-only pill (mini pill).

Vaginal ring

Vaginal rings are over 93% effective. A vaginal ring has the same hormones that are in the combined oral contraceptive pill. You place a new ring high up in your vagina every month and leave it there for three weeks to prevent pregnancy.

Condoms and diaphragms (barrier methods)

Barrier methods of contraception work by stopping sperm from reaching an egg.

These include:

- male condoms – worn over an erect penis (over 88% effective)
- female condoms – a sheath that fits loosely into the vagina (over 79% effective)
- diaphragm – a soft silicone cap that is placed in the vagina before sex (over 82% effective).

Condoms are the only form of contraception that offer protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They can also be used with other forms of contraception.

Permanent contraception

Permanent contraception for women involves an operation that closes the fallopian tubes to prevent pregnancy. Men can also have permanent contraception called a 'vasectomy'. These procedures should only be considered if you do not want to get pregnant in the future. Permanent contraception is over 99% effective.

Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception is also known as the 'morning after' pill. You can use this if you forget to take the Pill, you have unprotected sex or if a condom breaks during sex.

This pill prevents or delays ovulation – but it doesn't always prevent pregnancy. The emergency contraception pill is available from a doctor or pharmacist without prescription. It's over 85% effective and is most effective if taken within 24 hours after vaginal sex with a man.

When to see your doctor

If you're not sure which contraception to use, see your doctor. They can explain the advantages and disadvantages of each method so you can decide what's best for you.

You need a prescription for some forms of contraception, such as LARCs, vaginal rings and the Pill.

If you're sexually active, it's also important to have regular sexual health checks with your doctor or sexual health nurse.

For more information, resources and references, visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/sex-sexual-health/contraception

 **Jean Hailes
for Women's Health**

Phone 03 9453 8999
jeanhailes.org.au

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Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If you are worried about your health, talk to your doctor or healthcare team.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we acknowledge that this term is not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

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