

Contraception in Australia

Common questions



How does contraception work?

Contraception helps prevent pregnancy. It is also called 'birth control'. There are many different types of contraception in Australia and they each work differently. Some contain hormones that stop you from releasing eggs. Barrier methods, such as condoms, work by stopping sperm from reaching an egg.

No form of contraception is 100% effective at preventing pregnancy. But some forms are more reliable than others. For a list of the most effective options, visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/sex-sexual-health/contraception

How do I decide which contraception is right for me?

When making your decision, think about how effective the contraception is at preventing pregnancy. Also consider the cost, how easy it is to use, possible side effects and your stage of life. Your doctor or local sexual health service can talk through your options and help you decide which is best for you.

How can I get contraception?

It depends on which contraception you choose. You will need to ask your doctor for a prescription for some forms of contraception, such as:

- long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)
- vaginal rings
- the Pill.

You can get emergency contraception (also known as the 'morning after' pill) without a prescription from a pharmacist, doctor or sexual health clinic. You can also buy condoms and diaphragms without a prescription from some pharmacies, health clinics and online stores. If you choose a diaphragm, see a doctor or nurse to make sure it fits properly.

If I'm under 18, do I need permission from my parent or guardian to get contraception?

If you're under 18 and your doctor thinks it's in your best interests, you're able to get contraception health care without a parent attending or consenting. Your doctor will also make sure you're able to understand their advice when making decisions about contraception.

Remember, you can visit your doctor alone, but sometimes it's worth bringing a support person. This could be a trusted friend or family member.

Some forms of contraception (e.g. condoms) are available over the counter at supermarkets and pharmacies, so you don't need permission to buy them.

If I'm 18 or older, do I need permission from my partner to get contraception?

No. You have the right to use contraception and choose a method that works best for you. You don't need to involve your partner if you don't want to.

For some forms of contraception, you will need a prescription from a doctor.

How much does contraception cost?

This depends on the type you use. You may also need to pay to see a doctor to get contraception. It's a good idea to take your Medicare card with you when seeing a doctor as some of the costs may be covered.

Learn more about Medicare, including how to apply at servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare

Will I experience side effects if I use contraception?

Every form of contraception has advantages and disadvantages, including the possibility of side effects.

However, not everyone experiences the same side effects when taking the same type of contraception. For example, when taking the Pill, some women experience breast soreness and changes in mood, but others don't.

It's important to discuss the benefits and risks of different types of contraception with your doctor so that you can choose the right one for you.

When to see your doctor

Most methods of contraception do not protect you from STIs. Condoms are the only form of contraception that offer some protection against STIs. If you're sexually active, it's important to have regular STI screening. Talk to your doctor about how often you should be tested.

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



Phone 03 9453 8999
jeanhailes.org.au

Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.

Created July 2024

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.

© Jean Hailes for Women's Health 2024