

# Contraception

Our short guide to all the important stuff you should know!

## 1 What is contraception?

Contraception is medications, devices or habits that allow people to have sexual intercourse and avoid an unintended pregnancy. Contraception is an incredibly personal choice that everyone should have access to in some form.

## 2 How does it work?

Contraception works by stopping the sperm from fertilising the egg during sex. Ovaries normally only release one egg each month, occasionally more; that's one way we end up with twins, triplets, etc. Ejaculate or cum contains millions of sperm. Contraception is used to reduce the possibility of the sperm and the egg meeting.

## Where can I get information on contraception in Australia?

- > Doctor's office
- > Clinic – Youth Health, AMS, etc
- > Sexual Health clinic
- > Youth Service
- > Trusted website, e.g. Play Safe NSW
- > Family Planning clinic

Consider all the available forms of contraception and pick one that best suits you and your partner

## 3 Why use it?

Contraception can be used for many reasons. Some of these include: preventing unintended pregnancy, regulating menstrual cycles, relieving period symptoms, balancing hormones and managing other health concerns. It is a personal choice and you should chat with a medical professional to work out the best option for you.

## 4 Which one should I use?

There are many types of contraception and lots to consider about each method, including cost, accessibility, effectiveness and side effects.

Condoms are the only form of contraception that protects you from both unintended pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections (STIs), meaning all other contraceptive methods require the use of condoms to prevent the spread of STIs.

Contraception is a personal choice – some find the best fit straight away and for others it's trial and error until they find what they prefer.

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## Types of Contraception

### Barrier

## Other Barriers

### External Condom

**AKA:** Rubber

**How it works:** Thin covering is placed over the erect penis, creating a barrier that stops the sperm from entering the vagina. Can be used with water-based or silicone lube.

**Effectiveness:** 88% typical, 98% perfect

**Frequency:** Every time you have sex

**STI protection?** ✓ **Script required?** ✗

#### Pros

- ✓ Easy to access
- ✓ Affordable and can be free
- ✓ Non-hormonal

#### Cons

- ✗ Must be used correctly to work
- ✗ Susceptible to breakage
- ✗ Latex allergies

### Internal Condom

**AKA:** Femidom

**How it works:** Inserted into the vaginal canal, creating a barrier that stops the sperm from reaching the egg.

**Effectiveness:** 79% typical, 95% perfect

**Frequency:** Every time you have sex

**STI protection?** ✓ **Script required?** ✗

#### Pros

- ✓ Non-hormonal
- ✓ Can be inserted up to 8 hours before sex
- ✓ Some skin-to-skin protection
- ✓ Made from Nitrile, perfect for someone with a latex allergy
- ✓ Can be used with any type of lube

#### Cons

- ✗ More expensive than an external condom
- ✗ Can be difficult to find

### Dams

**AKA:** Dental Dams, Oral Dams

**How it works:** Although dams are not contraception, they are a barrier method that's placed over someone's vulva or anus and used during oral sex. If you've never heard of them, trust us, you're not alone. Let's learn some more.

**STI protection?** ✓ **Script required?** ✗

#### Pros

- ✓ Provide protection when giving or receiving oral sex
- ✓ Lots of flavours available

#### Cons

- ✗ Likely to involve a cost
- ✗ Can be difficult to find

### *This is really important!*

*Dams are not contraception and should only be used during oral sex. Dams stay outside the body – never insert a dam into a vaginal cavity or anus.*

**Alternatives:** Don't have a dam but want one? Unroll a condom and cut it straight down lengthways. Now you have a dam.



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## Types of Contraception

### Oral

#### The Pill

**AKA:** Combined Oral Contraceptive pill/birth control pill

**How it works:** The pill contains hormones: oestrogen and progestogen. When taken daily, the pill prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg and thickens cervical mucus, stopping the sperm from reaching the egg.

**Effectiveness:** 93% typical, 99.5% perfect

**Frequency:** Every day

**STI protection?** ✗ **Script required?** ✓

##### Pros

- ✓ Easy to access with a script
- ✓ Reversible
- ✓ Can assist with period symptoms

##### Cons

- ✗ May cause side effects
- ✗ Must be taken daily at the same time
- ✗ Can interact with other medications e.g. antibiotics

#### The Mini Pill

**AKA:** Progestogen Only Pill

**How it works:** Contains one hormone (progestogen) that thickens the cervical mucus, stopping sperm from reaching the egg. For some women, it will also stop the release of an egg.

**Effectiveness:** 93% typical, 99.5% perfect

**Frequency:** Every day

**STI protection?** ✗ **Script required?** ✓

##### Pros

- ✓ Easy to access with a script
- ✓ Reversible
- ✓ Less side effects than some other types of hormonal contraception
- ✓ Fertility returns straight away after you stop taking the tablet

##### Cons

- ✗ Must be taken daily at the same time to be most effective
- ✗ Can interact with other medications, e.g. antibiotics
- ✗ May cause some side effects

#### Emergency Contraception

**AKA:** Morning after pill or Plan B

**How it works:** It contains a hormone (levonorgestrel) that prevents the egg from being released. If the egg has already been released, you may still fall pregnant.

**Effectiveness:** > 85% if taken within 3 days of condomless sex. They are most effective when taken within 24 hours of sex.

**Frequency:** When needed

**STI protection?** ✗ **Script required?** ✗

##### Pros

- ✓ Easy to access – can be accessed over the counter at the pharmacy, through a GP or clinic
- ✓ Great in an emergency situation

##### Cons

- ✗ Will cause side effects
- ✗ Won't work if ovulation (egg being released) has already occurred

**Alternatives:** There are two other types of Emergency Contraceptives.

1. One is also a pill but it's made up of a different active ingredient called ulipristal acetate. This pill can be taken up to 5 days after sex. However, it can be harder to find than the morning after pill so always try to access this type of contraception early.
2. A copper IUD is the other option. This can also be an option up to the 5-day mark but you need to get access to it and have it inserted by a trained doctor or nurse.



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## Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)

### Hormonal IUD

**AKA:** Mirena/Kyleena

**How it works:** The IUD (intrauterine device) is inserted into the uterus, releasing small amounts of a synthetic hormone that thickens the cervical mucus, stopping the sperm from reaching the egg and thinning the lining of the uterus.

**Effectiveness:** 99.7% typical and perfect

**Frequency:** Every 5 years

**STI protection?** ✗ **Script required?** ✓

#### Pros

- ✓ Low maintenance
- ✓ Reversible
- ✓ Long lasting
- ✓ Cost efficient
- ✓ Can assist with period symptoms

#### Cons

- ✗ May cause side effects
- ✗ Doctor required to insert and remove it
- ✗ Slight discomfort during insertion and removal

### Non-Hormonal IUD

**AKA:** Copper IUD, the coil

**How it works:** The copper IUD is inserted into the uterus, creating an environment that stops sperm from moving properly. It also changes the lining of the uterus so that the uterus is not able to support a fertilised egg.

**Effectiveness:** 99.5% typical and perfect

**Frequency:** Every 5–10 years

**STI protection?** ✗ **Script required?** ✓

#### Pros

- ✓ Low maintenance
- ✓ Reversible
- ✓ Long lasting
- ✓ Non-hormonal
- ✓ Can be used as emergency contraception if inserted within 5 days of sex

#### Cons

- ✗ May cause side effects
- ✗ Doctor required to insert and remove it
- ✗ Slight discomfort during insertion and removal

### Implanon

**AKA:** Rod, Bar, Implant

**How it works:** It's a small plastic rod that's inserted under the skin in the upper arm. It slowly releases a hormone that stops ovulation (releasing an egg) and thickens the cervical mucus, stopping the sperm from reaching the egg.

**Effectiveness:** 99.95% typical and perfect

**Frequency:** Every 3 years

**STI protection?** ✗ **Script required?** ✓

#### Pros

- ✓ Low maintenance
- ✓ Reversible
- ✓ Long lasting
- ✓ Cost efficient

#### Cons

- ✗ May cause side effects
- ✗ Doctor required to insert and remove it
- ✗ Can cause temporary bruising

