



Birth Control: What Men Need to Know

The truth is most individuals assume that responsibility for birth control should fall on the individuals that can become pregnant, as it is often viewed that these individuals have more at stake in preventing pregnancy, as they are the ones who have to decide to continue with the pregnancy or terminate. Also, if they decide to continue and parent, these individuals are more often the primary care providers for their children.

However, anyone that is engaging in sexual activity has a right *and obligation* to know about birth control as well. I'm sure you've heard the old saying "It takes two..." Well, if you are not ready to parent a child, you should be just as informed about various birth control options - specifically, how they work, their effectiveness rates, when to use them, and their potential side effects.

Something to Think About...

Talking about birth control or even sex in general with your partner can be embarrassing and/or intimidating. Because of this, many people will avoid discussing the issue. Some individuals just assume their sexual partner is using birth control unless they say otherwise. *"I mean, if they aren't on the pill, they would tell me, right?"* Wrong! Not all individuals will disclose their birth control methods. Don't forget - it's embarrassing for them sometimes too! Also, birth control is your responsibility as well.

So, Remember...

- **NEVER assume they are using birth control.** They may not be, and if they aren't, you are risking an unplanned pregnancy by having intercourse.
- **ALWAYS ask.** Don't be afraid to bring up the topic. Your partner may be looking for a way to do the exact same thing.
- **Be INFORMED.** If they tell you that they are using the sponge, would you know how it works, or how effective it is? Also, will it protect you against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Remember that you are taking a risk too.

Now that you have taken the initiative to learn more about birth control options, there are a couple things you should know:

- **First**, there are MANY methods of birth control that all individuals can choose from, and once you are fully informed, you can help your partner decide which is best for both of you.
- **Second**, there are both hormonal methods and barrier methods. Both have pros and cons.
- **Third**, some methods can be used in combination. For example, if an individual is taking the pill, they can also use a barrier method for additional protection.
 - **Fourth**, no method is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy, even if used perfectly.
- **Finally**, no matter what method you choose, only the external condom and internal condom will protect you against STIs as well as pregnancy.

Hormonal Methods of Birth Control

All hormonal birth control methods contain hormones such as estrogen and/or progesterone and must be prescribed by a doctor.

The hormones work in three ways to prevent pregnancy:

- They prevent the ovaries from releasing an egg each month;
- They thicken the cervical mucus, which makes it difficult for sperm to enter the uterus; and
 - They alter the uterine lining, making it difficult for an egg to implant.

Overall, hormonal methods are highly effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly.

There are four methods of hormonal birth control - The Pill, The Patch, The Ring, and The Needle.

The Pill (a.k.a. Oral Contraceptives)

The pill is taken once a day AT THE SAME TIME for 21 days. After the 21 days, there is a seven-day break and during this time they should have their period. Once these seven days are over, an individual should start a new pack of pills. Some individuals will take 28 days of pills instead, and the only difference is that instead of taking a seven-day break, they will take their pills straight through and start a new pack the day after.

When taken correctly, the pill is about 97% effective. This means that three out of every 100 individuals will get pregnant per year while using the pill.

Some side effects can include weight gain, headaches, moodiness, and/or spotting.

The Patch (a.k.a. Evra)

The patch attaches to the skin and hormones are secreted through the skin layer. It is changed once a week for three weeks. During the fourth week, no patch is worn and during this time, the individual should have her period. There are only four places on the body that the patch can be worn: the upper arms, the upper buttocks, the pelvic/hip areas, and the shoulder.

The effectiveness rate and the side effects are the same as the pill. Side effects may also include skin irritation where the patch is worn.

The Ring (a.k.a. NuvaRing)

The ring is a flexible ring that is inserted into the vagina and left there for 21 days. During this time, hormones are slowly secreted. After 21 days, the ring is removed for seven days, and during this time, an individual should have their period. A new ring is inserted after the seven days. The ring is rarely felt by either partner during intercourse. If the ring accidentally falls out (which is very rare), they have two hours and rinse and re-insert.

The effectiveness rate is the same as the pill and the patch and the side effects are also similar, only to a lesser degree, as there is less hormone in the ring.

The Needle (a.k.a. Depo Provera)

The needle is different from the other hormonal methods as it only contains progesterone. The needle must be given by a doctor once every 90 days. It is injected in either the arm or buttocks.

The needle has the highest effectiveness rate of all the methods at 99.7%. This means that three out of every 1000 individuals will get pregnant per year while on the needle. Side effects can include substantial weight gain, loss of bone density, change in menstruation, and most often periods will stop completely.

Morning-After Pill (a.k.a. ECP)

The morning-after pill is a dose of pills that your partner can take within 72 hours after intercourse to prevent pregnancy. These pills should only be used if hormonal birth control is not being used regularly. These pills can be purchased at most pharmacies under the brand name Plan B. The Morning-After Pill should not be used as a regular birth control method. It should be used for emergencies only.

Barrier Methods of Birth Control

Barrier methods work by blocking the sperm from entering the uterus through the cervix. They are not as effective as hormonal methods and can be costlier. However, they provide an option for individuals who cannot use hormonal methods and can provide added protection for those who do.

Condoms

The external and internal condoms work by catching the sperm and semen and keeping it from entering the vagina. Condoms should be worn in conjunction with other methods to prevent the spread of STIs. Condoms are about 97% effective when used properly and every time.

The Sponge

The sponge is a sponge-like material that is inserted into the vagina against the cervix and stops the sperm from entering the uterus. The spermicide in the sponge helps by killing sperm. It is about 85% effective.

The Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a re-useable latex cup that is inserted into the vagina and works by blocking the cervix. Spermicide is also used. A prescription is needed for the diaphragm and it is about 85% effective.

What You Can Do to Help:

Now that you are informed about the different methods of birth control, you can help make sure your partner uses them properly. For example, if they are taking the pill, you can remind them each day to take it at the appropriate time. Or if you notice that they are using a method incorrectly (i.e. not putting the patch where it should be), you can correct the error and possibly prevent an unexpected pregnancy.

Also, if you both decide to use barrier methods, you can help them insert the method correctly.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Whatever methods you both choose to use, make sure you are fully informed! This pamphlet only provides you with a glimpse into the various methods. So, whatever the method, call or come by Planned Parenthood to ask questions and grab a pamphlet!

BE RESPONSIBLE! BE INFORMED!

Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm

Wednesday: 9am – 4:30pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm

Friday: 9am – 4:30pm

Phone:

579-1009

Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS

(1-877-666-9847)

Website:

www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com

Email:

pp.nlshc@gmail.com

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