



# UNDERSTANDING *Birth Control*

Being able to decide when you want to start a family gives you the freedom to live your life the way you envision it — but deciding which birth control method to use can be more complicated. Different types of birth control have different side effects, costs and levels of effectiveness. Also, the birth control that's right for you in your 20s might not be right for you in your 40s. In this guide, we'll help you understand your options, weigh the pros and cons of each method, and learn how this information impacts your long-term goals for starting a family.



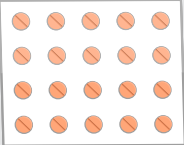
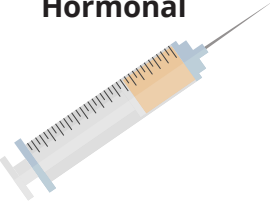

**Have questions about family planning? Talk to a Beaufort Memorial women's health provider.**  
[Request an appointment](#) today.



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# BIRTH CONTROL: PROS AND CONS

Not every birth control works the same or costs the same. Learn the differences so you can make an informed choice about which method works best for you.

TYPE	KIND	PROS	CONS	EFFECTIVENESS
<b>Barrier</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily accessible</li> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Nonhormonal</li> <li>• <b>Only birth control method that can prevent STDs and HIV</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can break</li> <li>• Must be used every time</li> </ul>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Barrier</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cervical cap</li> <li>• Diaphragm</li> <li>• Spermicide</li> <li>• Sponge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Nonhormonal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be used every time</li> <li>• Not always easy to use properly</li> <li>• No STD or HIV protection</li> </ul>	<b>71%-88%</b>
<b>Hormonal</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can improve acne and period pain</li> <li>• Inexpensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can have side effects</li> <li>• Must take daily</li> <li>• No STD or HIV protection</li> <li>• Require a prescription</li> </ul>	<b>91%</b>
<b>Hormonal</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patch</li> <li>• Ring</li> <li>• Shot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can improve acne and period pain</li> <li>• Can last a week to a few months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can have side effects</li> <li>• More expensive than the pill</li> <li>• No STD or HIV protection</li> <li>• Require a prescription or doctor visit</li> </ul>	<b>91%-94%</b>
<b>Long-acting reversible contraceptives</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implant</li> <li>• Intrauterine devices, or IUDs (copper and hormonal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can improve acne and period pain (implant and hormonal IUD)</li> <li>• Last three to 12 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can have side effects</li> <li>• Can worsen cramps and bleeding (copper IUD)</li> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Must be implanted by a physician</li> <li>• No STD or HIV protection</li> </ul>	<b>99%</b>

# BIRTH CONTROL QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Nearly two-thirds of American women use some form of contraception. So if you have questions, you're not alone. Below, we address some of the most common questions and misconceptions women have about birth control.



## **DOES BIRTH CONTROL INCREASE THE RISK FOR BREAST CANCER?**

While there have been no definitive randomized clinical trials, researchers have observed a link between some hormonal birth control methods and breast cancer, as well as cervical cancer. However, the increased risk is minimal and decreases when usage stops. Interestingly, birth control pills have been found to reduce the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancers.

## **DOES BIRTH CONTROL INCREASE THE RISK FOR BLOOD CLOTS?**

Yes. However, even women on hormonal birth control have a very low likelihood of developing a blood clot. Experts state that 1 out of 1,000 women on birth control (0.1%) develop a blood clot each year.

## **CAN THE PILL LEAD TO WEIGHT GAIN?**

Possibly. For some women, taking the pill can lead to weight loss. Weight gain from birth control seems to occur due to three causes: increased muscle, increased fat or fluid retention. If these affect you, ask your provider to recommend another birth control option.

## **DOES BIRTH CONTROL CAUSE DEPRESSION AND/OR MOOD SWINGS?**

For most women, the answer is no. For those who have a history of depression or negative side effects of birth control, some studies have shown an association between hormonal birth control and mood-related side effects.

## **HOW DOES BIRTH CONTROL IMPACT LONG-TERM FERTILITY?**

No evidence exists to suggest that birth control impacts fertility, no matter how long it's used. Once stopped, birth control's effects wear off quickly. Unless you have other fertility issues, you should not have a problem becoming pregnant after quitting birth control.

## **CAN BIRTH CONTROL IMPACT MY HEART HEALTH OR BLOOD PRESSURE?**

In women with pre-existing health conditions, certain hormonal birth control options increase the risk for heart disease. However, the increased risk is minor enough to not worry most women. Blood pressure may also increase with birth control. This is particularly true for women who are overweight, have a family history of high blood pressure, have kidney disease or smoke.

## **SHOULD I TAKE A BREAK FROM BIRTH CONTROL EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE?**

Research has determined that long-term use of hormonal birth control causes no significant health risk. So there is no need to give your body "a break." The only reasons to quit the pill are if you experience unwanted side effects, are no longer sexually active or are ready to become pregnant.

# WHICH BIRTH CONTROL METHOD IS FOR YOU?

As you read on Page 2, there are several birth control methods available to you. Which should you choose? That depends on your goals.

## PRIMARY GOAL: Prevent pregnancy forever

**Opt for a permanent solution.** Women can have tubal ligation, a procedure in which the fallopian tubes are tied, cut or sealed off to block sperm from fertilizing an egg. Fewer than 1 in 100 women who use this method will become pregnant. Men can have a vasectomy, in which the tubes that carry sperm are cut or blocked. This prevents sperm from fertilizing an egg. As with tubal ligation, it's almost 100% effective.

## PRIMARY GOAL: Prevent pregnancy in the short-term

**If you want to delay pregnancy for three years or longer,** a long-acting reversible contraceptive may be best. These include implantable rods and intrauterine devices (IUDs), which are inserted when you don't want to become pregnant and removed when you do.

**If you want to delay pregnancy for a few months to a few years,** you may be better off with the pill, patch, ring or shot. These require daily, weekly or monthly use, but you can become pregnant immediately to a few weeks after stopping use. They are highly effective. Barrier methods, such as condoms and diaphragms, are also effective at preventing pregnancy if used correctly, but they must be used every time you have sex.

## PRIMARY GOAL: Reduce PMS symptoms

**Choose a hormonal birth-control method.** Hormonal IUDs and short-term hormonal birth control methods, including the pill, patch, ring and shot, help lessen painful periods and PMS symptoms. Research shows hormonal birth control may help you have lighter, shorter periods and less cramping.

## Emergency Contraception

In recent years, emergency contraception has become more widely available. It's important to note that birth control and emergency contraception are not the same. Birth control prevents you from getting pregnant while you're having sex. Emergency contraception reduces the chance of pregnancy after unprotected sex. It does not terminate a pregnancy — it works only if you have not already become pregnant.

Emergency contraception typically comes in pill form.

- **Ulipristal** requires a prescription and must be taken no later than five days after unprotected sex.
- **Progestin-only pills**, such as Plan B, are most effective taken within three days after unprotected sex, and you can find them at your local drugstore.

Copper IUDs, a form of long-acting birth control, can also prevent a pregnancy after unprotected sex if your physician inserts the device within five days of intercourse.

Emergency contraception shouldn't be used as a regular birth control method. It can be less effective and cause more side effects than other methods. Ask your OB-GYN for help if a specific birth control method isn't working for you and your partner.

### Need to determine the best birth control for you?

[Request an appointment with a Beaufort Memorial women's health provider who can help you decide.](#)



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