

SEXUAL HEALTH IN PLAIN ENGLISH

CONTRACEPTION

Contraception

Some types of sex (penis in vagina sex) can make a baby, but it's possible to have and enjoy sex without getting pregnant. Contraceptives are medicines or barriers that can help to prevent a pregnancy. Different types are available and a person needs to find the right one for them. The body parts someone has, the medications they are on and/or medical issues they have, could mean they cannot use some contraceptives. A person needs to see their doctor or nurse to work out what is right for them. Some people might use contraception to help with periods or skin problems. Just because someone is using contraception doesn't mean they are having sex.

Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARCs)

LARCs are contraceptives which last for a long time. These are used by people with a uterus or womb so that they can have sex without becoming pregnant. A specially trained doctor or nurse is needed to both insert and remove the contraceptive from the person's body. Each type of LARC last for a different amount of time. Fertility, or being able to get pregnant, goes back to normal after the contraceptives are taken out.

LARCs available in Australia are:

Contraceptive Implant (Implanon)

- This is a flexible, plastic rod that has a safe chemical hormone (progestogen) in it. A hormone is something that is naturally inside the body and makes changes to the body. A chemical hormone is one made by a scientist.
- The Implanon rod is inserted under the skin of the arm by a doctor or nurse.
- It can last for 3 years.
- It is 99.95% effective at preventing a pregnancy. This means that if 100 people used it in a year, less than 1 would get pregnant.
- It works by stopping the release of an egg each month (ovulation).

Intrauterine device (IUD)

- There are two types of IUDs – the hormonal IUD and copper IUD
- IUDs are inserted in the uterus and are removed using the string by a specially trained doctor or nurse.
- IUDs work by stopping the egg and the sperm meeting and/or by stopping a fertilised egg sticking to the lining of the uterus (implantation).

- **Hormonal IUD (often called Mirena or Kyleena)**
 - The hormonal IUD contains a safe chemical hormone (progestogen) in a small 'T'-shaped piece of plastic.
 - It can last for 5 years.
 - It is 99.8% effective.
- **Copper IUD**
 - The Copper IUD contains copper, a type of metal, instead of hormones.
 - It can last for 5-10 years (depending on which type you use).
 - It is 99.5% effective.

Other methods of contraception

Contraceptive injection

- This is another contraceptive that a person does not have to think about every time they have sex.
- It lasts for 12 weeks and then a person needs to have a new injection.
- It contains a safe chemical hormone (progestogen).
- The contraceptive injection ranges in effectiveness from 96-99.8%.
- Once this contraceptive method is stopped, it can take a while for fertility to get back to normal.

Vaginal ring

- This is a soft, plastic ring that contains safe chemical hormones (oestrogen and progestogen).
- The ring is put into the vagina and stays there for 3 weeks. It is then taken out for the person to have a period. After a week, a new ring is put in.
- The vaginal ring ranges in effectiveness from 93-99.5%.

Contraceptive pill

There are 2 types of pills, the Combined Oral Contraceptive (COC) pill and the Progestogen only (POP) pill.

- **Combined Oral Contraceptive (COC) Pill**
 - Has the hormones oestrogen and progestogen in it
 - Ranges in effectiveness from 93-99.5%
 - A tablet taken every day
 - Must be taken at the same time every day to work properly.
- **Progestogen only (POP) Pill**
 - Has the hormone progestogen in it
 - Ranges in effectiveness from 93-99.5%
 - A tablet taken every day
 - Must be taken at the same time every day to work properly.

Remember: Some of these contraceptives may not be right for every person. People need to talk to a doctor or nurse to work out what is right for them.

Barrier methods

This is when something is put between the sperm and the egg to stop them meeting and starting a pregnancy.

Some barrier methods of contraception are:

Condoms

- Condoms are the only type of contraception that also protect against Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) (sometimes called sex germs).
- Condoms are available at chemists, supermarkets, adult stores and most petrol stations.
- **External condoms**
 - These are thin rubber (usually latex) tubes that cover an erect (stiff) penis or sex toy before sex.
 - External condoms range from 88-98% effective.
- **Internal condoms**
 - These are a type of thin rubber tube that is put inside the vagina or anus before sex.
 - Internal condoms range from 79-95% effective.

Diaphragm (Caya®)

- This is a cup-shaped device that is put into the vagina before having vaginal sex.
- It can be put in up to 6 hours before sex and must stay in for about 6 hours after vaginal sex.
- The diaphragm ranges between 82-86% effective.
- These can be bought at a chemist, but it is best to have a doctor or nurse check that it is being put in the right place before you need to put it in for sex.
- Diaphragms do not protect against STIs.

Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception, sometimes called 'the morning after pill', is used if other contraceptive methods have failed or you didn't use any, and you are worried you might get pregnant.

- There are 2 types of emergency contraception (EC).
- The copper IUD can be used as a form of EC.
- EC also comes in tablet form.
- Someone should only use these in an emergency. An example might be that someone wasn't using a hormonal method of contraception (like a pill, IUD or rod) and the condom broke, or someone forgot to take their oral contraceptive pill, or there wasn't any contraception used at all.
- Emergency contraception needs to be taken as soon as possible after having sex.
- EC tablets can be accessed by going to a doctor or going directly to a pharmacy/chemist.

Permanent method

There are permanent ways to prevent pregnancy. These involve an operation depending on the body parts a person has.

Tubal surgery

- This is used for people with a female reproductive system.
- The surgery involves clipping or putting a coil in small tubes inside the body to block the egg from moving into the uterus (womb).

Vasectomy

- This is used for people with a male reproductive system.
- The surgery involves cutting small tubes inside the body to stop the sperm from being able to leave the penis.

Tubal surgery and Vasectomy are 99.5% effective and last forever.

Where to get contraception

A doctor will need to write a script, which has to be bought from the chemist, for:

- the Implant
- the IUD
- the Injection
- Pill
- Ring
- Copper IUD (for Emergency Contraception)

At the chemist, a person can get the following items over the counter by asking the pharmacist:

- Diaphragm
- Emergency Contraception (tablet)

External condoms can be bought from:

- chemist
- supermarket
- petrol stations
- some public toilets

Internal condoms can be bought:

- at some chemists
- online

For permanent methods of contraception, a person must see a doctor.

Remember, everyone has the right to make their own choices about what happens with their body, and this includes their sexual and reproductive health.

- No-one should pressure a person into using contraception.
- No-one should pressure a person into choosing one of these contraceptive options over any other one.
- No-one should pressure a person into using no contraceptives at all.
- If a person does get pregnant, no-one should pressure them into a particular decision regarding what to do about it.