



FAMILY PLANNING METHODS

Summary of Contraceptive Options

This information sheet provides a very simple summary of the main contraceptive options available. It gives a brief description of each method and indicates the circumstances in which its use may or may not be appropriate. It also highlights any special considerations that should be taken into account. Readers are advised to refer to more detailed information sheets and to their healthcare provider for each of the methods listed in order to make a final and informed decision.

KEY

E: Effectiveness: number of unplanned pregnancies per 100 woman-years of use (= Pearl Index)
(i.e. the lower the number, the more effective the method).

NB: special comments

METHOD	E	MODE OF ACTION	APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE	NB
Female sterilization	< 1	Blocking of the Fallopian tubes, so that sperm and egg cannot meet	For women with a completed family	When there is doubt whether more children will be wanted later, also not immediately after delivery	<i>Can be reversed, but with difficulty and uncertain success</i>
Male sterilization	< 1	Blocking the vas deferens, so that no sperm cells are ejaculated	For men with a complete family	When there is doubt whether more children will be wanted later	<i>Semen test has to show that there are no sperm cells, before other methods of contraception can be stopped. Can be reversed, but with difficulty and uncertain success</i>
Implant	< 1	One or two small plastic rods, under the skin in the upper arm, release a progestagen, which makes the mucus of the cervix impenetrable to sperm cells, and in most women also stops ovulation	For women who want 2–3 years of contraception, without having to think about it	When some irregular bleeding is unacceptable	<i>Works for 3–5 years, needs to be removed if pregnancy is desired</i>
Injection	< 1	Injection with progestagen, which makes the mucus of the cervix impenetrable to sperm cells and also stops ovulation in most women	For women who want 12 weeks of contraception, without having to think about it	When some irregular bleeding is unacceptable	<i>Works for 12 weeks, cannot be removed after injection, needs to be repeated if continued contraception is needed</i>



METHOD	E	MODE OF ACTION	APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE	NB
Vaginal ring	< 1	Releases an estrogen and a progestagen, which stop ovulation	For women who only want to think twice per month about contraception	For smokers, or for women with thrombosis in their history	<i>Works for 3 weeks when in the vagina, then has to be replaced after a stop week</i>
Patch	< 1	Releases an estrogen and a progestagen, which stop ovulation	For women who only want to think about contraception once a week	For smokers, or for women with thrombosis in their history	<i>Not well suited in humid climates, can be visible</i>
Combined oral contraceptive pill	< 1	Contains an estrogen and a progestagen, which stop ovulation	For women who want to take a pill daily	For smokers, for women with thrombosis in their history, for women who tend to forget daily pill intake	
Progestagen only pill, or estrogen free pill	1	Contains a progestagen, which makes the mucus of the cervix impenetrable to sperm cells and in a number of women also blocks ovulation	For women who do not want or cannot take estrogen	For women who tend to forget daily pill intake	<i>Most progestagen only pills must not be taken more than 3 hours late, but some can be taken up to 12 hours late</i>
Intrauterine device (IUD) with hormone	< 1	Makes mucus of the cervix impenetrable to sperm and prevents implantation of an egg	For women who only want to think about contraception once in 5 years	For women at risk for sexually transmitted disease	<i>Women need to check regularly whether it is still in place. IUD needs to be replaced after 5 years</i>
Intrauterine device (IUD)	2	Prevents implantation of an egg	For women who do not want to think about contraception for a number of years	For women with heavy menstruation, or for women at risk for sexually transmitted disease	<i>Women need to check regularly whether it is still in place</i>
Male condom	2	Prevents sperm entering the vagina	For men whose partner cannot or does not want to take contraceptives, for men with multiple partners, for men with infrequent intercourse		<i>Provides some protection against sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS</i>
Female condom	5	Prevents sperm entering the vagina	For women who cannot or do not want to use other contraceptives, who have multiple partners or infrequent intercourse		<i>Provides some protection against sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS</i>
Diaphragm	6	Prevents sperm from entering the uterus	For women who cannot or do not want to use other contraceptives, who have multiple partners or infrequent intercourse	For women who are not familiar with their vagina	<i>Has to be used with a spermicide</i>