



Contraception Options

Contraception is the practice of prevention of pregnancy. There are numerous methods of contraception which may be short or long acting, reversible or permanent. They have different failure rates as well as advantages and disadvantages to suite the woman's or man's needs.

Abstinence means not having sexual intercourse. It is the only birth control method that is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted diseases.

Natural Family Planning method (NFP) or fertility awareness does not require medication, physical devices, or surgery to prevent pregnancy. This method relies on the woman's body physiology to know the time of ovulation. This method involves monitoring different body changes such as basal body temperature or cervical mucus variations. The woman then abstains from unprotected sex around the time of ovulation.

Withdrawal: Withdrawal method involves the complete removal of the penis by man from the woman's vagina before ejaculation.

Barrier methods is one of the most common contraceptive methods where a physical barrier is used to obstruct the sperm from entering a woman's uterus. Barrier methods include use of male condom, female condom, diaphragm, cervical cap, and contraceptive sponge. The male condom is a thin covering made of latex or polyurethane that is rolled over an erect penis before sexual intercourse to prevent the sperm from entering a woman's vagina. The female condom is a polyurethane (plastic) tube that has a flexible ring at each end and is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse. A diaphragm is a flexible dome that covers the cervix inside the vagina. The cervical cap is smaller cup made of latex rubber or plastic. They should be used in conjunction with a spermicidal gel and are placed in the vagina before sexual intercourse. The sponge is a soft, round barrier device made of polyurethane foam.

Hormonal methods: In this method synthetic hormonal preparations containing oestrogen and/or progesterone will be taken orally (tablets), implanted into body tissue (implants), injected under the skin (injections), absorbed from a patch on the skin (skin patches), or placed in the vagina (vaginal rings). These methods work by preventing ovaries from releasing an egg for fertilisation or changing the cervical mucous to make it impenetrable to sperm.

Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD) are devices that are placed inside the uterus that is either made of copper or impregnated with hormone. These devices have a lifespan of 3-8 years depending on the device.

Permanent Contraception includes tubal ligation (clipping or cutting of the fallopian tubes) or vasectomy.

The choice of a particular method of contraceptive can depend on your preference, age, health, frequency of sexual activity, number of sexual partners, future pregnancy plans, wishes to have children in the future, and certain medical conditions. It is important to know that there are many contraceptive options available and the right choice for each woman or man can be found with appropriate consultation and if adequate time is allowed for trialing them.

It is important to remember that most birth control methods prevent pregnancy; however not all methods of birth control offer protection against sexually transmitted diseases.