












Birth Control Methods Chart

Designed for providers to help clients consider their birth control options, this chart takes client autonomy into account and presents methods that clients can start and stop on their own and those that require provider involvement (prescription or procedure). The chart highlights method characteristics, including use & frequency, so clients can make informed decisions, based on their own preferences. Note: Within each table, the methods are listed in order of pregnancy risk, and side effects are alphabetized within each method.

CLIENTS CAN START AND STOP ON THEIR OWN



Method	Pregnancy Risk*	Use & Frequency	Period Changes	Potential Side Effects	Other Considerations
Pill (progestin-only), Opill 	9 out of 100	Client takes by mouth same time every day.	Spotting or bleeding between periods. May not have traditional withdrawal bleeding	Acne, breast tenderness, headache, nausea, weight gain	Available OTC. Safe for people with high blood pressure, blood clot history, and those who can't take estrogen.
Condom (external) 	13 out of 100	Client rolls onto erect penis (external) every time has sex.	None	Allergic reactions, vaginal irritation	Method prevents STIs. Requires a cooperative partner.
Fertility Awareness-based (FAB) 	15–24 out of 100 (depends on specific FAB method)	Client tracks signs of fertility daily and abstains from sex on fertile days.	None	None	Must have regular cycles and be comfortable tracking basal body temperature and cervical mucus.
Spermicide or vaginal sponge 	21 (spermicide alone) or 9 (sponge) out of 100	Client inserts into vagina before penile-vaginal sex every time.	None	Vaginal irritation	Pair with another method for back-up.
Condom (internal) 	21 out of 100	Client inserts into vagina (internal) every time has sex.	None	Allergic reactions, vaginal irritation	Method prevents STIs. Requires a cooperative partner.
Withdrawal 	25 out of 100	Partner with penis ejaculates outside of and away from vagina.	None	None	Requires a cooperative partner.

REQUIRES PROVIDER TO START WITH A PRESCRIPTION (CLIENTS CAN STOP ON THEIR OWN)—CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE




Method	Pregnancy Risk*	Use & Frequency	Period Changes	Potential Side Effects	Other Considerations
Shot (IM/SC) progestin-only 	4 out of 100	Provider administers shot (IM), or the client self-administers (SC) shot every 12–15 weeks.	Spotting, lighter period, or no period	Bone density loss, headache, weight gain	Delay in fertility return. Not visible to others.
Patch (transdermal system estrogen + progestin) 	7 out of 100	Client places patch on back, butt, or belly. Every month, changes patch weekly for 3 weeks and no patch for 1 week.	Temporary spotting or lighter period	Breast tenderness, headache, nausea, skin irritation, stomach pain	May be less effective in people with a BMI of 30 or over. Extended/continuous use option.
Pill (combined estrogen + progestin) 	7 out of 100	Client takes by mouth daily.	Temporary spotting or lighter period	Breast tenderness, headache, nausea, risk for blood clots	May reduce acne, cramping, and PMS. Extended/continuous use option.
Ring (estrogen + progestin) 	7 out of 100	Client places ring into vagina. Every month, keeps ring in vagina for 3 weeks and then removes for 1 week.	Lighter period or temporary spotting	Breast tenderness, nausea	Two types: monthly and yearly. May reduce acne, cramping, and PMS. Not visible but can be felt by partners.
Pill (progestin-only, "the mini pill") 	9 out of 100	Client takes by mouth at the same time every day.	Spotting or bleeding between periods. May not have traditional withdrawal bleeding	Acne, breast tenderness, headache, nausea, weight gain	Safe for people with high blood pressure, blood clot history, and those who can't take estrogen.

*The number of people out of every 100 who have an unintended pregnancy within the first year of typical use of each method.



REQUIRES PROVIDER TO START WITH A PRESCRIPTION (CLIENTS CAN STOP ON THEIR OWN)—CONTINUED

Method	Pregnancy Risk*	Use & Frequency	Period Changes	Potential Side Effects	Other Considerations
Vaginal contraceptive gel (Phexxi) 	14 out of 100	Client inserts into vagina before each act of penile-vaginal sex.	None	Allergic reactions, UTI, vaginal irritation	May act as lubricant for dryness.
Diaphragm or cervical cap 	17 (diaphragm) and 29 (cap w/spermicide) out of 100	Client inserts into vagina with spermicide before every instance of penile-vaginal sex.	None	Allergic reactions, UTI, vaginal irritation	Same device may be used for two years.




REQUIRES PROVIDER FOR CLIENTS TO START AND STOP (REVERSIBLE METHODS)

Method	Pregnancy Risk*	Use & Frequency	Period Changes	Potential Side Effects	Other Considerations
Implant (progestin-only) 	<0.1 out of 100	Provider inserts rod under skin in upper arm. Lasts up to 5 years and can be removed earlier.	Unpredictable spotting, lighter period, or no period	Acne, depressed mood, headache, mood swings, weight gain	Mild pain with placement. Not visible but can be felt by partners.
Levonorgestrel IUD (progestin-only) 	<0.2 out of 100	Provider inserts device into uterus. Varies by type, up to 8 years, and can be removed earlier.	Spotting, lighter period, or no period	Cramping pain with placement	Not visible but can be felt by partners.
Non-hormonal copper IUD 	0.8 out of 100	Provider inserts device into uterus. Lasts up to 12 years and can be removed earlier.	Spotting or heavier period	Cramping pain with placement	Effective as EC within 7 days of unprotected sex. Not visible but can be felt by partners.

REQUIRES PROVIDER TO PERFORM PROCEDURE (PERMANENT METHODS)

Method	Pregnancy Risk*	Use & Frequency	Period Changes	Potential Side Effects	Other Considerations
Tubal ligation 	<0.1 out of 100	Single surgical procedure done at a hospital.	None	Bleeding, surgical pain	Requires anesthesia and up to 2 weeks of recovery.
Vasectomy 	1 out of 100	Single outpatient surgical procedure.	NA	Bleeding, surgical pain	Up to 2 days for recovery.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Method	Pregnancy Risk*	Use & Frequency	Period Changes	Potential Side Effects	Other Considerations
Non-hormonal copper IUD 	0.8 out of 100	Provider inserts device into uterus within 7 days of unprotected sex.	Spotting or heavier period	Cramping pain with placement	Lasts up to 12 years and can be removed earlier.
Ulipristal acetate (ella) 	1 out of 100	Client takes by mouth as soon as possible within 5 days of unprotected sex.	Spotting or period at new time	Abdominal pain, dizziness, headache, nausea	Requires prescription. May be less effective in people over 194 pounds.
Levonorgestrel 1.5mg pill (Plan B) 	1-2 out of 100	Client takes by mouth within 120 hours (~5 days) of unprotected sex.	May induce spotting or period	Breast tenderness, dizziness, headache, nausea, stomach pain, tiredness, vomiting	Available OTC. May be less effective in people over 165 pounds.

*The number of people out of every 100 who have an unintended pregnancy within the first year of typical use of each method.