

Family planning devices



There are a lot of contraception options out there - the question is what one suits you best? Getting frisky doesn't have to be risky business – not when there are many contraception methods out there to suit different needs.

Contraception can be used to prevent pregnancy and some types will also protect you from [sexually transmissible infections \(STIs\)](#).

You might find yourself asking: Which method will be best for me and my lifestyle? Which method protects against STIs?

What about convenience of use? Possible side-effects? Cost? How effective will it be?

To celebrate World Contraception Day this September 26, join us as we break it down for you by exploring some of the most popular types of contraceptives - with pictures. Starting with...

The Condom

The condom is the only form of contraception that protects against most STIs as well as preventing pregnancy. This method of contraception can be used on demand, is hormone free and can easily be carried with you. And it comes in male and female varieties.

Male condoms are rolled onto an erect penis and act as a physical barrier, preventing sexual fluids from passing between people during sex. The female condom is placed into the vagina right before sex. Based on typical use, the female condom is not quite as effective as the male latex condom and it may take a little practice to get used to.

Pros include: It's the best protection against STIs; can be used on demand; hormone free.

Cons include: It can tear or come off during sex if not used properly; some people are allergic to latex condoms.



Condoms are the only form of contraception that also protect against STIs.

The Oral Contraceptive Pill

It's the little tablet taken once a day. The oral contraceptive pill is the [most commonly reported method of contraception used by Australian women](#). There are a few different types of pill to choose from, so it's about finding the one that's right for you. The combined pill contains estrogen and progestin and mini pill contains only one [hormone](#), a progestin. The pill can have many benefits, however remembering to take it on time is a must.

Pros of taking the pill include: Highly effective when used correctly; permits sexual spontaneity and doesn't interrupt sex; some pills may even reduce heavy and painful periods and/or may have a positive effect on acne.

Cons include: Forgetting to take your pill means it won't be as effective; it can only be used by women; is not suitable for women who can't take oestrogen-containing contraception; it does not protect against STIs.

The pill is only available by getting a prescription from a medical professional so visit [your local doctor](#) or [sexual health clinic](#).



The oral contraceptive pill is taken once a day and is currently the most common contraception used by Australian women.

Intrauterine Device (IUD)

This small, T-shaped device is made from material containing progesterone hormone or plastic and copper and is fitted inside a woman's uterus by a trained healthcare provider. It's a long-acting and reversible method of contraception, which can stay in place for three to 10 years, depending on the type.

Some IUDs contain hormones that are gradually released to prevent pregnancy. The IUD can also be an effective emergency contraception if fitted by a healthcare professional within five days (120 hours) of having unprotected sex.

IUDs containing coppers are 99% effective and the ones containing hormones are 99.8% effective, so you're about as protected as you possibly can be by a contraceptive method.

Cons include: Irregular bleeding and spotting occurs in the first six months of use; requires a trained healthcare provider for insertion and removal; does not protect against STIs.



IUDs offer very effective protection against pregnancy.

The Contraceptive Implant

In this method, a small, flexible rod is placed under the skin in a woman's upper arm, releasing a form of the hormone progesterone. The hormone stops the ovary releasing the egg and thickens the cervical mucus making it difficult for sperm to enter the womb. The implant requires a small procedure using local anesthetic to fit and remove the rod and needs to be replaced after three years.

Pros of the implant include: Highly effective; doesn't interrupt sex; is a long-lasting, reversible contraceptive option.

Cons include: Requires a trained healthcare provider for insertion and removal; sometimes there can be irregular bleeding initially; does not protect against STIs.



Women can choose to use the implant as a long-term contraceptive method.

The Contraceptive Injection

The injection contains a synthetic version of the hormone progestogen. It is given into a woman's buttock or the upper arm, and over the next 12 weeks the hormone is slowly released into your bloodstream.

Pros: The injection lasts for up to three months; is very effective; permits sexual spontaneity and doesn't interrupt sex.

Cons: The injection may cause disrupted periods or irregular bleeding; it requires keeping track of the number of months used; it does not protect against STIs.



The contraceptive injection uses progestogen to prevent pregnancy.

Emergency Contraception Pill (The 'Morning After' Pill)

The [Emergency Contraception Pill](#) can be used to prevent pregnancy after sex if contraception wasn't used, a condom has broken during sex, or a woman has been sexually assaulted.

While it is sometimes called the 'Morning After' pill, it can actually be effective for up to five days after having unprotected sex. The sooner it is taken, the more effective it is; when taken in the first three days after sex, it prevents about 85% of expected pregnancies.

This pill contains special doses of female hormones. Any woman can take the emergency contraception pill, even those who cannot take other oral contraceptive pills. It can be bought over the counter at a pharmacy or chemist without a prescription.

The common side effects of the emergency contraceptive include nausea, vomiting and the next period may be early or delayed. Emergency contraception does not protect against STIs.



Emergency contraception can be used after having sex to prevent pregnancy.

Contraceptive Ring

This method consists of a flexible plastic ring constantly releasing hormones that is placed in the vagina by the woman. It stays in place for three weeks, and then you remove it, take a week off then pop another one in. The ring releases the hormones oestrogen and progestogen. These are the same hormones used in the combined oral contraceptive pill, but at a lower dose.

Pros include: You can insert and remove a vaginal ring yourself; this contraceptive method has few side effects, allows control of your periods and allows your fertility to return quickly when the ring is removed.

Cons include: It is not suitable for women who can't take oestrogen-containing contraception; you need to remember to replace it at the right time; does not protect against STIs.



The contraceptive ring releases a lower dose of hormones to control a woman's ability to conceive than other contraceptive methods like the pill.

Diaphragm

A diaphragm is a small, soft silicon dome is placed inside the vagina to stop sperm from entering the uterus. It forms a physical barrier between the man's sperm and the woman's egg, like a condom.

The diaphragm needs to stay in place for at least six hours after sex. After six - but no longer than 24 hours after sex - it needs to be taken out and cleaned.

Some of the pros: You can use the same diaphragm more than once, and it can last up to two years if you look after it.

Some of the cons: Using a diaphragm can take practice and requires keeping track of the hours inserted. The diaphragm works [fairly well if used correctly](#), but not as well as the pill, a contraceptive implant or an IUD.



Diaphragms might seem like an 'old school' contraceptive method, but could they be your contraception of choice?

Sterilisation

Sterilisation is the process of completely taking away the body's ability to reproduce through open or minimal invasion surgery. It is a permanent method of contraception, suitable for

people who are sure they never want children or do not want any more children. Sterilisation is available for both women and men and is performed in a hospital with general anesthesia.

If you are thinking about sterilisation, issues to talk with your doctor about include your reasons for wanting to be sterilised, whether other methods of contraception might be more suitable and any side effects, risks and complications of the procedure.



Because sterilisation can be permanent, it's only suitable for people who definitely do not want to have any children, or any further children, in the future.