

## Contraception (birth control)

**Received:** February 17, 2021; **Accepted:** February 21, 2021; **Published:** February 26, 2021

### Editorial

Birth control, also known as contraception, is designed to prevent pregnancy. Birth control methods may work in a number of different ways: Preventing sperm from getting to the eggs. Types include condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps, and contraceptive sponges.

The type of birth control you use is a personal decision, and there are many options to choose from. If you're a sexually active female, you may consider birth control pills. Birth control pills, also called oral contraceptives, are medications you take by mouth to prevent pregnancy. They're an effective method of birth control. Find out how they work and what side effects they can cause, as well as other factors to help you decide if birth control pills are a good choice for you.

Combination pills contain synthetic (man-made) forms of the hormones estrogen and progestin. Most pills in each cycle are active, which means they contain hormones. The remaining pills are inactive, which means they don't contain hormones.

Combination pills work in two ways. First, they prevent your body from ovulating. Second, these pills cause your body to thicken your cervical mucus. There are few reversible methods of birth control.

#### Intrauterine Contraception

- Levonorgestrel Intrauterine System (LNG IUD)
- Copper T Intrauterine Device (IUD)

#### Hormonal Methods

- Implant
- Injection or "shot"
- Combined oral contraceptives
- Progestin only pill

Contraception is a powerful tool both for preventing unwanted

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**Citation:** Olivia S (2021) Contraception (birth control). Crit Care Obst Gyne Vol.6 No.5:19

pregnancy. Some methods, such as the male condom, can also reduce the risk of an STI. However, it must be used correctly to do so. No method of birth control is 100 percent effective. Combining two methods, for example, the pill with a condom, offers extra protection as well as some protection against STIs. It is important to be informed and to use birth control wisely.

#### Most Effective Birth Control Methods

Implant, IUD, vasectomy, and tubal methods-99% effective

Birth control shot-94% effective

Birth control pill and vaginal ring-91% effective

Condom, diaphragm, cervical cap, and birth control sponge-79%-88% effective

#### Common side effects of birth control pills

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Weight gain
- Skin discoloration
- Acne
- Bleeding between periods or spotting

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of these complications. This risk is greatest in women over 35 who are heavy smokers (>15 cigarettes/day). Your health-care professional usually will recommend that you quit smoking if you use birth control pills.