

### Short-term hormonal contraception

Short-term hormonal contraception (birth control) works by releasing hormones — progestin, estrogen, or both — into your body. The hormones prevent unplanned pregnancies by keeping your body from releasing an egg (ovulating). This type of birth control can't protect you from sexually transmitted infections; only condoms, used correctly every time, can do that. For the first seven days after starting short-term hormonal birth control, you might still be fertile, and should use another form of contraception.

#### Types of short-term hormonal birth control

- **The oral contraceptive pill (the pill)** is about 93% effective at preventing pregnancies. But if you take it as prescribed at the same time every day, the pill prevents about 99% of pregnancies. The pill may ease symptoms of endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), period cramps and bleeding. You can get a pill that has estrogen and progestin, or one with only progestin.
- **Injectable contraceptives (the shot)** is about 96% effective at preventing pregnancies. You get the shot in your doctor's office every 2-3 months. The shot helps protect against cancer in the uterine lining and uterine fibroids. The shot only contains progestin.
- **The patch** is a small, thin square of flexible plastic you wear on your body. You wear it for three weeks, then take it off the week of your period. It releases progestin and estrogen through your skin. It's about 93% effective, but may be less effective if you're over 200 pounds. The patch can ease your period symptoms and the symptoms of PCOS and endometriosis.
- **The combined vaginal ring (the ring)** is a flexible ring that releases estrogen and progestin into your body. You put the ring in your vagina for three weeks, remove it for the fourth week when you get your period, and then put a new ring in. The ring can ease symptoms of endometriosis, PCOS, period cramps and bleeding. The ring is about 91% effective at preventing pregnancies.

#### Questions to ask yourself

1. Will I be able to take a pill at the same time every day?
2. Is there a safe space to store my pills, rings or patches?
3. Will I be able to make doctor appointments to get my shot when I need it?
4. Will I use a backup method of birth control? How will I protect myself from STIs?

#### Questions to ask your doctor

1. How soon will this birth control work? After I stop, how long before I'm fertile again?
2. Am I at a high risk for blood clots or breast cancer?
3. Do I have any reason to not take estrogen?
4. Will my weight make this method any less effective? Will I gain weight?

For members who don't speak English, or are deaf or hard of hearing, we offer free oral interpretation services for all languages as well as auxiliary aids to assist you. To get these services, call 1-800-600-4441 (TTY 711) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time.

To speak to a nurse or doctor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call the 24-hour Nurse HelpLine at 1-866-864-2544 (TTY 711) for English or 1-866-864-2545 (TTY 711) for Spanish.

For more helpful information on family planning:

- [Office on Women's Health](#)
- [Medline Plus](#)
- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [Office of Adolescent Health](#)

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Contraception

<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>, accessed August 14, 2018

World Health Organization

Family Planning

<http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/fp-global-handbook/en/>, accessed August 14, 2018