

# Birth Control Guide



Queer-Focused Sexual Health Center

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**IUD (Intrauterine Device)-** A small T-shaped device that sits in the cervix from 3-12 years depending on the type of IUD.



**Effectiveness:** About 99% effective.

**Prescription:** A provider is needed to insert an IUD.

## Types of IUDs:

- **Hormonal IUDs** use the synthetic hormone levonorgestrel. The hormones prevent pregnancy in two ways: 1) they make the mucus on the cervix thicker. This mucus blocks sperm so it can't get to an egg. 2) The hormones in the IUD can also stop ovulation (when eggs leave the ovaries), which means there is no egg for a sperm to fertilize. It can take up to 7 days for hormonal IUD's to start working, which is why it is important to use back up method (condoms) for the first week of having the IUD. Can lighten/stop periods.
  - Liletta and Mirena- Can last up to 7 years.
  - Kyleena- Can last up to 5 years.
  - Skyla- Can last up to 3 years.
- **Nonhormonal IUDs** are also known as copper IUDs because they consist of a plastic T that has copper wrapped around it. Copper affects the way sperm cells move, preventing them from reaching the egg. It is more than 99% effective and starts working immediately after insertion.
  - Copper- Can last up to 12 years.

## Potential Side Effects:

Nausea, vomiting, spotting between periods, breast tenderness, headaches/migraines, mood changes, and decreased libido can occur.

**Side effects from any of the listed birth control methods vary person to person. If side effects start to affect daily life, talk to your provider about stopping or changing methods.**

**Emergency Contraceptive-** Birth control used after a sexual encounter.



**Effectiveness:** Depends on the method and how soon it is taken after unprotected sex. If taken within 24 hours, there is a 95% chance of preventing a pregnancy. If taken between 25-48 hours, there is an 85% chance. The efficacy diminishes as time goes on.

**Prescription:** A prescription is not needed for most pill methods. They can be bought over the counter at drug stores or with a provider. Some methods like Ella and the copper IUD need a provider to prescribe or insert.

## Types of Emergency Contraceptive:

- Copper IUD- does not use hormones and can last up to 12 years. Can be inserted within 5 days of having unprotected sex and is 99% effective.
- Levonorgestrel pills such as Plan B work for people who weigh under 155 pounds. They can lower the chance of getting pregnant by 75-89% when taken within 3 days of unprotected sex.
- Ella is a pill is for people that weigh more than 155 pounds. Lowers chances of getting pregnant by 85 percent when taken within 5 days after unprotected sex.

## Potential Side Effects:

Side effects are not common for the morning-after pill or ella, but some people get an upset stomach, feel lightheaded or dizzy, or have tender breasts for a short time. See IUD side effects for the copper side effects.

**Condoms-** one-time-use plastic sheath that covers a penis



**Effectiveness:** 98%, which means out of 100 incidents, 2 pregnancies occur.

## Types of Condoms:

- Latex
- Non-latex (for people with a latex allergy i.e. have itching, pain, redness, hives)
- Ribbed/studded
- Internal- bigger non-latex sheath, good for anal sex or vaginal sex
- Thin/thick
- Snug/Large

Condoms can be used with water or silicone lubrication to prevent friction that may cause tearing. They are the only method that prevents STI's.

## What is Birth Control?

- Birth control is any method used to prevent pregnancy.
- Some (but not all) birth control protects against STI's/HIV.
- Some methods use hormones, while others do not.
- Some methods require daily actions while others can be taken/inserted once and last for months or years.
- Other methods can be used once per sexual encounter.
- Some people use birth control for reasons other than preventing pregnancy such as making a period lighter/nonexistent, help with acne, and more.

You may have to explore a little before finding a method that best suits you. Everyone reacts differently to the side effects of birth controls, so choose a prevention method that best fits your lifestyle.

## How to get Birth Control

Most hormonal birth control will require a prescription. Below are providers that take new patients. There are also methods to get some types of birth control online with a virtual visit.

**Planned Parenthood**- takes insurance and Medicaid in addition to having low cost out-of-pocket options. They have several locations and online services.

303-832-5069; [plannedparenthood.org](http://plannedparenthood.org)

**Children's Hospital** - subsidized birth control until age 24. They have several locations and online services.

720-777-2248 ; [www.bc4u.org](http://www.bc4u.org)

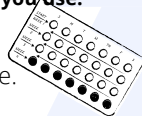
**Bedsider**-a website for finding a provider to prescribe birth control.  
[www.bedsider.org](http://www.bedsider.org)

**Tracking your menstrual cycle can help with keeping birth control on track. People use it to help with determining ovulation, setting reminders for birth control or tracking menstrual symptoms.** Some recommended menstrual apps that do not share your personal data include:

- Spot On
- Flo
- Clue
- Euki (available in spanish)
- Cycles

**It is important to keep yourself safe when using apps to track personal information, make sure you vet whatever app you use.**

## Pills- hormonal pills taken daily



**Effectiveness:** If taken daily, it is up to 99% effective.

The efficacy decreases with inconsistent pill taking.

- It can take up to 7 days for the pill to start working, which is why it is important to use a back-up method (condoms) for the first week of starting the pills.

**Prescription:** A prescription is needed for the pills.

### Types of Pills:

- Mini pills- low dose progestin hormone only pill. All pills in a month long pack are hormonal and they have to be taken daily.
- Combination pills- contain both estrogen and progestin. Can be taken in a way that will prevent a period from happening.

### Potential Side Effects:

Nausea, vomiting, spotting between periods, breast tenderness, headaches/migraines, mood changes, decreased libido.

## Ring- a flexible vaginal ring inserted monthly or yearly



**Effectiveness:** When used as directed it is 91-99% effective.

Efficacy decreases with inconsistent ring insertion.

- If started during the first 5 days of a period, it will work right away. Otherwise, it can take up to 7 days for the ring to start working, which is why it is important to use a back-up method (condoms) for the first week of having the ring.

**Prescription:** A prescription is needed for the ring.

### Types of Rings:

- Both types are hormonal (estrogen and progestin) and prevent pregnancy by stopping ovulation and thickening cervical mucus, blocking the sperm from getting through.
- Nuva Ring- Worn for 3, 4, or 5 weeks and taken out the last week to have a menstrual cycle. Can be used to skip periods.
- Annovera- hormonal ring worn for 13 cycles at a time. It can also be taken out every 21 days to have a menstrual cycle.

### Potential Side Effects:

Nausea, vomiting, spotting between periods, breast tenderness, headaches/migraines, abdominal pain, irregular bleeding, GI symptoms, vaginal infection methods.

## Patch - small wearable patch sticks on skin and is replaced weekly.



**Effectiveness:** If used correctly it is 99% effective, but is considered 91% effective since mistakes are easy to make.

- It can take up to 7 days for patch to start working, which is why it is important to use a back-up method (condoms) for the first week of starting.

**Prescription:** A prescription is needed for the patch.

### Types of Patches:

- Both types are hormonal (estrogen and progestin) and prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation and thickening cervical mucus, blocking the sperm from getting through. Both can be worn on the belly, butt, or back. Patches are replaced weekly for 3 weeks, then stopped for a week to have a period, unless it is being used to skip periods.
- Xulane - can be worn on the upper arm.
- Twirla - can be worn on lower abdomen, butt, or upper torso (excluding breasts)

### Potential Side Effects:

Headaches, nausea, sore breasts, changes in periods (early, late, or stopping altogether while on the patch), spotting (light bleeding or brown discharge), and skin reactions where the patch goes (like itching, dryness, pain, swelling, or a rash).

## Injection- a shot done once every 3 months



**Effectiveness:** If taken correctly up to 94% effective, it decreases efficacy with inconsistent injections.

- It can take up to 7 days for the shot to start working, which is why it is important to use a back-up method (condoms) for the first week of having the shot.

**Prescription:** A prescription is needed for the shot.

**Types of Shots:** There is only one type of injection and it's known as the Depo Shot. It contains the hormone progestin and prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation and thickening cervical mucus, blocking the sperm from getting through. After one year of injections, 50% to 75% of women have no periods.

### Potential Side Effects

Nausea, weight gain, headaches, sore breasts, mood changes, spotting between periods, no period at all, heavier periods.

## Implant- small rod that goes into the arm for up to 5 years.



**Effectiveness:** More than 99% effective.

- It can take up to 7 days for the implant to start working, which is why it is important to use a back-up method (condoms) for the first week of having the implant.

**Prescription:** A provider must be seen for an implant as it has to be inserted under the skin while the patient is under anesthetics.

**Types of Implants:** For now only the Nexplanon implant is available. It releases the hormone progestin and prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation and thickening cervical mucus, blocking the sperm from getting through.

### Potential Side Effects:

Dizziness, headaches, mood changes, depression, decreased sex drive, changes in menstrual bleeding patterns.