

Options for Postpartum Contraception

When thinking about postpartum birth control, consider the following questions:

- What methods have worked, or not worked, for you in the past?
- Do you plan any future pregnancies? If so, how soon?
- How effective of a method do I want to have? (Think: how important is it to not get pregnant right now?)

Is breastfeeding a good method of birth control?

- The “Lactational Amenorrhea Method” is a method of birth control. This means that each time you breastfeed your baby, your body releases a hormone called prolactin which stops your body from making the hormones that cause you to ovulate (release an egg). When you are not ovulating, you cannot get pregnant. This method is only effective if:
 - You have not started your period yet
 - You are breastfeeding only and not giving your baby any other food or drink
 - You are breastfeeding at least every 4 hours during the day and every 6 hours at night
 - Your baby is less than 6 months old
- This method is no longer effective if: you start your period, you give your baby formula, food or drink besides breastfeeding, you are breastfeeding less often than every 4-6 hours, or your baby is more than 6 months old
- For more information on LAM, visit: <https://www.lli.org/lactational-amenorrhea-fertility-birth-control-and-breastfeeding/>

Hormonal Methods

Progestin Only Methods- Progestin only methods are preferred during the early postpartum period and breastfeeding. They do not increase the risk of blood clot and are not thought to have any effect on breast milk supply.

- Progestin-only pills (“minipills”): If you like to take pills every day, you can use the minipill. In order for this pill to work well, you have to take 1 at the same time each day. When you stop breastfeeding, most women should switch to the pills that have both estrogen and progestin because they are better at keeping you from getting pregnant.
- Progestin IUD (Mirena or Liletta): The progestin IUD is inserted into the uterus like the copper IUD. It works for up to 8 years. IUDs are inserted 6+ weeks after the baby is born.
- Progestin implant (Nexplanon): The progestin implant is a small matchstick-sized flexible rod. It is placed into the fatty tissue in the back of your arm. It works for up to 5 years.
- Progestin shot (Depo-Provera): The progestin shot is given every 3 months. It is very effective if you come to the office on time for your regularly scheduled injection.

Combined Progestin and Estrogen Methods

These methods use 2 hormones, called estrogen and progestin. These methods increase your risk of a blood clot, which is already higher than normal after you have a baby. If you choose one of these methods, your baby must be at least 6 weeks old and they should be used with caution if you are breastfeed as they may decrease milk supply.

- Combined birth control pills: You take a pill each day.
- Vaginal ring (NuvaRing): The ring is worn in the vagina for 3 weeks then left out for 1 week before you put in a new ring.
- Patch (Ortho Evra): The patch is placed on your skin and changed every week for 3 weeks then left off for a week before putting a new patch on a different area of your skin.

Non-Hormonal Methods

- The copper intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD) (ParaGard) is a small, T-shaped device that is inserted into your uterus (womb) through the vagina and cervix. The copper IUD lasts for 10 years.
- Sterilization (getting your tubes tied or your partner having a vasectomy) is very effective, but it is permanent. You should choose sterilization only if you do not want to have more children.
- Natural family planning is monitoring your body for signs of ovulation and not having sex when you think you are ovulating. This method is reliable only if you are having regular periods every month.
- Barrier methods (condoms, diaphragms, sponges, and spermicides) are used at the time you have sex. These methods are effective only if you use them correctly every time.

How effective is each method?

