Birth Control Across the Gender Spectrum

Although we use clinical terms for body parts for clarity, we recognize and affirm that the language people use for genitals is ever-evolving, varied, and personal.

DO YOU NEED BIRTH CONTROL?

Birth control can be helpful if you do not want to get pregnant or get someone pregnant. Some birth control methods can also help decrease monthly bleeding and cramping, or offer protection from HIV/STIs.

CAN YOU GET PREGNANT?

If you have a uterus and ovaries, and have not had menopause, you can get pregnant if you have penis-in-vagina sex. Even if you take testosterone. Although it may stop your monthly bleeding, testosterone does not keep you from getting pregnant.

CAN YOU GET SOMEONE PREGNANT?

If you produce sperm, you can get someone pregnant if you have penis-in-vagina sex. This is true even if you take estrogen. Estrogen may lower your sperm count, but it does not keep you from getting someone pregnant.

HORMONES IN BIRTH CONTROL

Some birth control methods use hormones. Some use both estrogen and progestin, while others use only progestin. While the estrogen and progestins in birth control are safe to use with testosterone taken for gender affirming care, some people who take testosterone prefer to avoid the methods that use estrogen.

BIRTH CONTROL FOR PEOPLE TAKING TESTOSTERONE

People who have a uterus and ovaries and take testosterone can use any birth control method. Hormonal birth control may help decrease monthly cramping and bleeding. Some people use a birth control method to control bleeding, even if they are not trying to prevent pregnancy. Some birth control side effects can cause distress. For instance, some methods may cause breast pain or spotting. If side effects upset you, talk to your clinician about changing methods. You can stop a method any time without cutting back.

BIRTH CONTROL FOR PEOPLE TAKING ESTROGEN

People who produce sperm and who take estrogen can use condoms. If their partner(s) have a uterus, they can choose any birth control method.

PERMANENT OPTIONS

Permanent methods are great for people who don't ever want to get pregnant or get someone pregnant. These include tubal ligation, hysterectomy, orchiectomy, and vasectomy.

Symbol Key:



No Prescription Needed



Protects from HIV/STIs



Has Hormones



No Hormones

METHODS WITH PROGESTIN

Method	How to Use	Does it Change Bleeding?	Things to Know	How well does it work?
Emergency Contraception Pills Progestin EC (Plan B One-Step® and others) and ulipristal acetate (ella®)  	Take EC pills as soon as you can after unprotected sex. Works best the sooner you take it. Pills can work up to 5 days after unprotected sex. If pack contains 2 pills, take both together.	Your next monthly bleeding may come early or late. May cause spotting.	• There are two kinds of EC pills. One has the hormone progestin and one has ulipristal acetate (UPA). • Progestin EC is sold at pharmacies, convenience stores, and online. Some college campuses and health department vending machines sell it. • You can get progestin EC without a prescription. You can get UPA with a prescription. • Progestin EC does not interact with testosterone. We don't know if UPA interacts with testosterone. • May cause nausea, headaches, dizziness, belly pain, or breast/chest pain for 1-2 days after. • Progestin EC pills do not work as well if your body mass index (BMI) is over 25. UPA EC does not work as well if your BMI is over 30. • Can take a pregnancy test 2-3 weeks after to make sure it worked.	The sooner you take EC pills, the better they work.

Method	How to Use	Does it Change Bleeding?	Things to Know	How well does it work?
The Implant Nexplanon®  Hormones	A clinician places this thin plastic rod under the skin of the upper arm. Once you have it, you do not have to do anything for it to work. It must be removed by a clinician.	May cause frequent spotting that is hard to predict. Monthly bleeding may be longer, shorter, or stop. Cramps may improve.	• Works for 5 years. • You can ask your clinician to remove it at any time. • Most implants cannot be seen, but you can feel it if you touch the skin over it. • May cause mood changes, weight gain, headache, acne, and/or skin changes in the upper arm. • After it is removed, you can get pregnant right away.	Fewer than 1 in 100 people get pregnant.
IUD: Hormonal Liletta®, Mirena®, Skyla®, and others  Hormones	This small T-shaped device is placed in the uterus by a clinician. Once you have it, you do not have to do anything for it to work. Usually removed by a clinician.	May cause lighter monthly bleeding, spotting, or no monthly bleeding. Cramps may improve.	• Works for 3 to 8 years, depending on the IUD you get. • You can ask your clinician to remove it at any time. Some people prefer to remove it themselves. • You will not feel the IUD in you. • Some can be used as emergency contraception. • May cause bloating, nausea, headaches, or breast/chest soreness. • Insertion can be painful. Ask your clinician about ways to make it more comfortable. • After it is removed, you can get pregnant right away.	Fewer than 1 in 100 people get pregnant.
Progestin-Only Pills Slynd, Camila, NorQD, Opill  Hormones	Take the pill at the same time each day. After you finish a pack of pills, start a new pack the next day.	Can make monthly bleeding lighter and shorter. May cause spotting. Cramps may improve.	• Opill and a generic called norgestrel are the only options available without a prescription. You can get it at pharmacies, convenience stores, and online. • You can get other brands with a prescription. • May cause nausea, and/or breast/chest soreness. • You can become pregnant right after stopping the pills.	7 in 100 people get pregnant.
The Shot Depo-Provera®  Hormones	Get a shot every 3 months (13 weeks). Give yourself the shot or get it in a health center or clinic. You can get the shot at a health care office, or you can give yourself the shot.	May cause spotting, no bleeding at all, or longer bleeding. Cramps may improve.	• Each shot works for up to 15 weeks. • Can improve PMS symptoms. • May cause weight gain, bloating, headaches, and/or mood changes. • Bones may become slightly thinner while taking the shot. This goes back to normal once you stop the shots. • May take months to get pregnant after you stop the shots. • Contains a progestin hormone.	4 in 100 people get pregnant.

METHODS WITH NO HORMONES

Method	How to Use	Does it Change Bleeding?	Things to Know	How well does it work?
External Condom  Rx · Protects from HIV STIs · NO Hormones	Put on a new condom when the penis is erect. Use a new condom each time you have sex. Use a non-latex condom if allergic to latex.	No	• Can buy at many stores or get for free from a health center or clinic. • Can put on as part of sex play/foreplay. • Can help sex last longer. • Can be used for oral, vaginal, and anal sex. • May decrease the sensitivity of the penis during sex. • May break or slip off.	13 in 100 people get pregnant.
Internal Condom FC2®  Rx · Protects from HIV STIs · NO Hormones	Pinch the inner ring and push it into the vagina. Keep the outer ring outside of the vagina and hold it in place when the penis enters. Put a new condom in each time you have sex. Use lubrication as needed.	No	• Can get online with a prescription. • May be able to get without a prescription from a health center or clinic. • Can put in as part of sex play/foreplay. • Can be used for anal and vaginal sex. • May increase vaginal/anal pleasure and decrease sensitivity of the penis during sex. • Latex-free. • You and your partner may feel it during sex. • May be hard to insert. • May slip out of place during sex. • Do not use with an external condom.	21 in 100 people get pregnant.
Diaphragm Caya®, Milex®  NO Hormones	Put silicone cup in the vagina each time you have sex. Leave it in for 6 hours after sex. It holds spermicide near the cervix and blocks sperm from reaching the egg. Always use with spermicide.	No	• Lasts up to 2 years. • You can get it with a prescription. • The Caya® diaphragm comes in one size. A clinician will fit you for a Milex® diaphragm. • Do not use if you have a vaginal infection. • Some people get irritation in the vagina or urinary tract, or bladder infections after using. • Using spermicide may raise the risk of getting HIV.	17 in 100 people get pregnant.
IUD: Copper Miudella®, ParaGard®  NO Hormones	This small T-shaped device is placed in the uterus by a clinician. Once you have it, you do not have to do anything for it to work. Usually removed by a clinician.	May cause stronger cramps and heavier, longer monthly bleeding.	• Miudella works for 3 years or more. Paragard works for 12 years or more. • You can ask your clinician to remove it at any time. Some people prefer to remove it themselves. • You will not feel the IUD in you. • Paragard can be used as emergency contraception. • Insertion can be painful. Ask your clinician about ways to make it more comfortable. • After it is removed, you can get pregnant right away.	Fewer than 1 in 100 people get pregnant.
Phexxi®  NO Hormones	Insert gel using the applicator deep into the vagina, like a tampon, each time you have sex.	No	• Works right away and lasts up to 1 hour. • You can get it with a prescription. • Can be put in as part of sex play/foreplay. • May irritate the vagina or penis. • Do not use if you have had a lot of vaginal infections, urinary tract infections, or other urinary problems.	14 in 100 people get pregnant.

Method	How to Use	Does it Change Bleeding?	Things to Know	How well does it work?
Spermicide Cream, gel, sponge, foam, inserts, film  Rx NO Hormones	Insert spermicide deep into the vagina each time you have sex.	No	• Lasts up to 30 minutes. • Some types work right away, others start working after 10 minutes. • Can buy at many stores. • Can insert as part of sex play/foreplay. • Comes in many forms: cream, gel, sponge, foam, inserts, film. • May irritate the vagina or penis. Changing brands may help. • Can be messy. • May raise the risk of getting HIV if used often.	28 in 100 people get pregnant.
Withdrawal Pull-Out Rx NO Hormones	Pull penis out of vagina before ejaculation (that is, before coming).	No	• Costs nothing. • Less pleasure for some. • Does not work if penis is not pulled out in time. • Must interrupt sex.	20 in 100 people get pregnant.

METHODS WITH ESTROGEN

Some people prefer to avoid methods with estrogen, but they are perfectly safe to use – even if you are taking testosterone.

Method	How to Use	Does it Change Bleeding?	Things to Know	How well does it work?
The Patch Ortho Evra®  Hormones	Put on a new patch once a week for three weeks. No patch in week 4. Put the patch anywhere on your upper outer arm, belly, buttock, or back.	Can make monthly bleeding more regular, lighter, and shorter. May cause spotting. Cramps may improve.	• You can get it with a prescription. • May help with acne. • You can become pregnant right after stopping the patch. • Can irritate the skin under the patch. • May cause nausea and/or breast/chest soreness. • Do not use during the first 3-6 weeks after childbirth.	7 in 100 people get pregnant.
The Pill  Hormones	Take the pill daily. After you finish a pack of pills, start a new pack the next day.	Can make monthly bleeding more regular, lighter, and shorter. May cause spotting. Cramps may improve.	• You can get it with a prescription. • May help with acne. • May cause nausea and/or breast/chest soreness. • Some side effects can get better by changing brands. • You can become pregnant right after stopping the pills.	7 in 100 people get pregnant.
The Ring Nuvaring®, ANNOVERA®  Hormones	Put the ring in the vagina. **Monthly ring (NuvaRing):** Change each month. Leave the ring in the vagina for 3 weeks (21 says). Then take it out for 1 week (7 days). **Yearly ring (ANNOVERA):** Change each year.	Can make monthly bleeding more regular, lighter, and shorter. May cause spotting. Cramps may improve.	• There are 2 types: a monthly ring and a yearly ring. • You can get it with a prescription. • One size fits all. • May help with acne. • May cause nausea and/or breast/chest soreness. • May slip out during sex or when you use the bathroom. • NuvaRing must be kept in the refrigerator. • You can get pregnant right after stopping the ring. • Contains estrogen and progestin hormones.	7 in 100 people get pregnant.