

If you have any questions, please ask your physician or nurse.

Postpartum Birth Control

Postpartum contraception is birth control used in the weeks after you have a baby (the postpartum period). If you are not using a birth control method, it is possible to become pregnant very soon after having your baby.

There are many birth control methods that are safe to use in the postpartum period. This handout will help you weigh the pros and cons of each method. The different types of birth control are grouped by how well they prevent pregnancy.

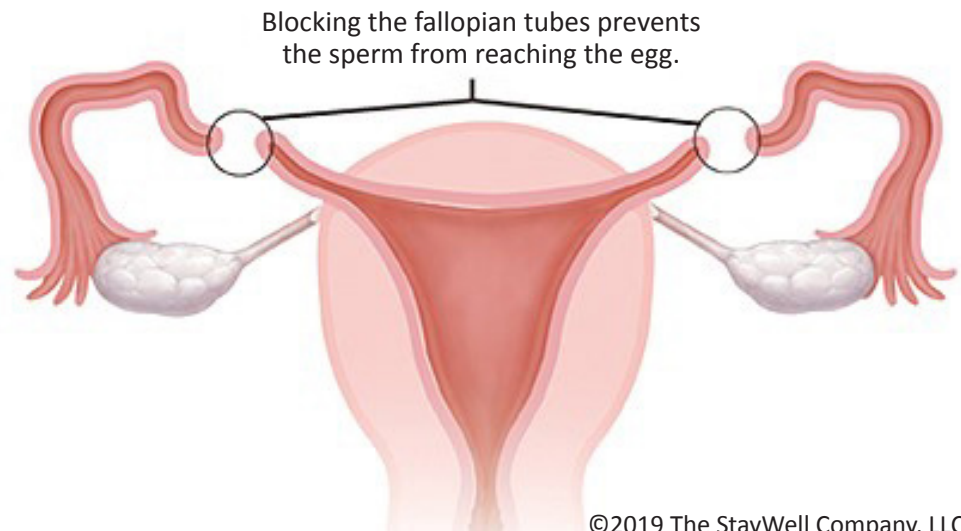
Most effective methods of birth control

If 100 women used the following methods of birth control after having a baby, only 1 woman would have a failure and become pregnant over 1 year of use.

Female sterilization

Sterilization is a surgery that blocks the fallopian tubes, so sometimes it is called “having your tubes tied” (Figure 1). It can either happen at the time your baby is born, if you have a cesarean delivery, or just after your baby is born, if you have a vaginal delivery. Sterilization is a permanent method of birth control, but once the surgery is done, you never have to remember to do anything to prevent pregnancy.

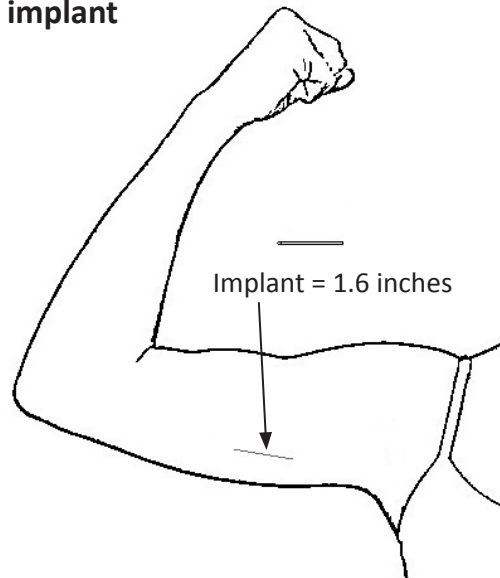
Figure 1. Female sterilization



Birth control implant (Nexplanon®)

Nexplanon is a small, plastic device the size of a matchstick that releases hormones to prevent pregnancy (Figure 2). It is inserted under the skin of your upper arm. Once it is inserted, you do not have to do anything for it to work. It provides birth control for up to 3 years. You can have it removed at any time. Nexplanon does not affect your ability to become pregnant in the future if you decide to stop using it.

Figure 2. Birth control implant



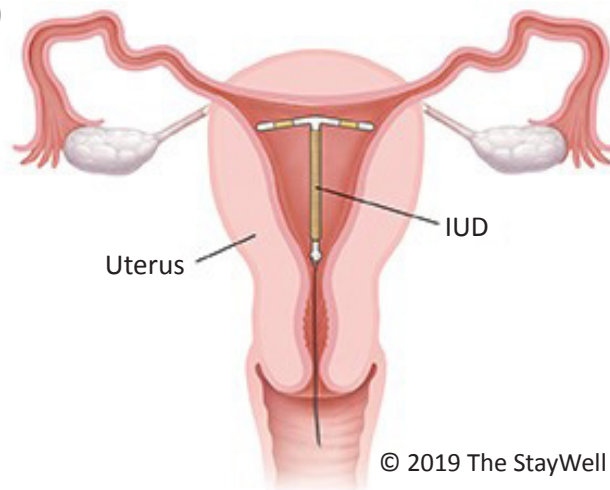
Intrauterine device (IUD)

An IUD is a small, T-shaped piece of plastic that is inserted into your uterus to prevent pregnancy (Figure 3). There are 2 types of IUDs:

- ParaGard® is an IUD that uses copper to prevent pregnancy. It does not have hormones. It provides birth control for up to 10 years.
- Liletta® is an IUD that uses hormones to prevent pregnancy. It provides birth control for up to 5 years.

Once the IUD is inserted, you do not have to do anything for it to work. You can have it removed at any time. An IUD will not affect your ability to become pregnant in the future if you decide to stop using it.

Figure 3: Intrauterine device (IUD)



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Moderately effective methods of birth control

If 100 women used the following methods of birth control after having a baby, between 6 and 12 women would have a failure and become pregnant over 1 year of use.

Injectable progestin (Depo-Provera®)

Depo-Provera is a shot of hormones given in your arm or buttocks to prevent pregnancy (Figure 4). You have to get it every 3 months for it to work best. You can stop using the shot at any time.

Figure 4: Injectable progestin



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Lactational amenorrhea

If you decide to breastfeed your baby, this can also be a birth control method because the hormones that make breastmilk also prevent pregnancy (Figure 5). “Lactational” refers to breastfeeding and “amenorrhea” means not having your period. You must exclusively breastfeed, meaning you do not supplement your baby’s diet with formula. If your periods return, using only breastfeeding does not work very well to prevent pregnancy.

Figure 5: Breastfeeding



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Progestin-only birth control pill

The progestin-only pill is a hormone pill that you take each day to prevent pregnancy (Figure 6). You can stop using the pill at any time.

Figure 6: Progestin-only birth control pill



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Least effective methods of birth control

If 100 women used the following methods of birth control after having a baby, 18 or more women would have a failure and become pregnant over 1 year of use. All of the following methods must be used correctly each time you have sex.

Condoms

A condom is a sheath that forms a barrier between the penis and vagina. It is important that the male condom be placed correctly on the penis before any sexual contact to work best (Figure 7). Female condoms should not be used immediately after childbirth.

Figure 7: Male condom



Spermicide

A spermicide is a chemical that is put in the vagina before sex to kill sperm. It comes in many forms, including gels, foams, creams, tablets and sponges (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Spermicides



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Withdrawal

To use withdrawal, the penis is removed from the vagina before ejaculation. This means that the man must be able to easily tell when he is about to ejaculate.

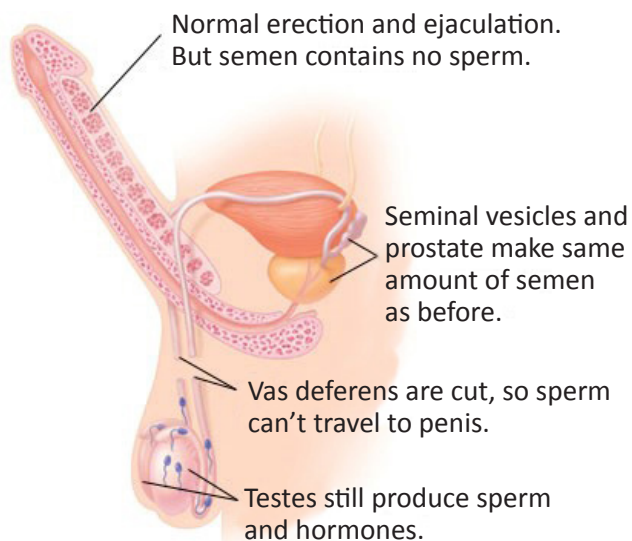
Delayed methods of postpartum birth control

In addition to the methods listed above, there are other methods of birth control that you can get after you go home from the hospital. These are described below.

Male sterilization

A vasectomy is a male sterilization surgery that prevents a man from releasing sperm (Figure 9). It is a permanent method of birth control. Once the surgery is done, your partner never has to remember to do anything to prevent pregnancy.

Figure 9: Vasectomy



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Estrogen-progestin pill

The estrogen-progestin pill is a hormone pill that you take each day to prevent pregnancy (Figure 10). You can stop using the pill at any time.

Figure 10: Estrogen-progestin birth control pill

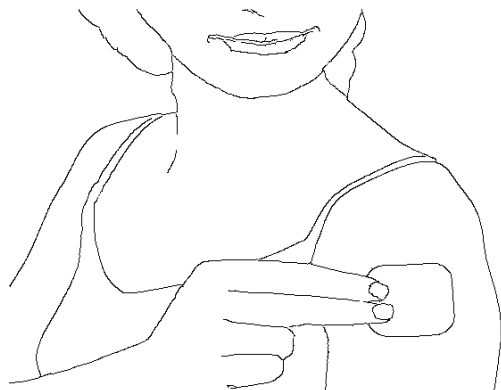


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The patch

“The patch” is a skin patch placed on the arm, back or stomach that contains hormones to prevent pregnancy (Figure 11). You must place a new patch every week for 3 weeks, and then remove it for 1 week. You can stop using the patch at any time.

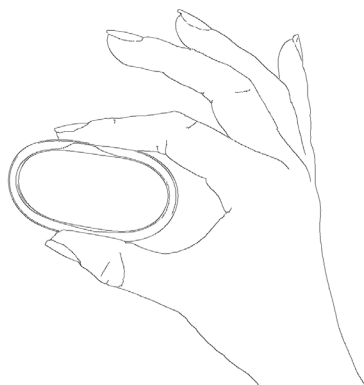
Figure 11: The patch



The ring (NuvaRing®)

The NuvaRing is a flexible, plastic vaginal ring that contains hormones to prevent pregnancy (Figure 12). You must place it into your vagina for 3 weeks, and then remove it for 1 week. You can stop using the ring at any time.

Figure 12: The ring



If you have any questions about postpartum birth control, please ask your physician.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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