



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Birth Control

Introduction

Birth control is used to reduce the risk of pregnancy from vaginal intercourse with the opposite sex. Asking the right questions during your conversation with your healthcare provider can help you to find the birth control option that is right for you. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Ovulation	Pregnancy occurs when a sperm combines with an egg and implants within the uterus. Ovulation occurs when the ovary releases an egg. This usually occurs towards the middle of the menstrual cycle.
Birth Control Pill	Oral contraceptives use one or more hormones to stop ovulation. They are given as a daily pill. Oral contraceptives also thicken the cervical mucus.
Birth Control Patch or Ring	These two options deliver hormones that are similar to what is found in the combined pill. The patch is stuck on the skin, and it is replaced once a week. The ring is placed in the vagina, and it is replaced once a month. Both options are similarly effective to the pill but some people find them easier to use.
Birth Control Shot	Depo-Provera is a progesterone shot that is given once every three months. This hormone is similar to the mini-pill. It prevents pregnancy through stopping ovulation. It also makes the cervical mucus thicker.
Intrauterine Device (IUD)	A highly effective and long lasting form of contraception, there are IUDs that contain hormones and those that do not. IUDs must be inserted by a physician, and they last from 3-12 years.
Condom	There are both internal and external condoms. Internal condoms are placed inside the vagina and external condoms over the penis. Unlike other forms of birth control, both types of condoms reduce the risk of STDs. However, they are less effective than other options at preventing pregnancy. They can be used in combination with other forms of birth control.
Diaphragm	This device is placed into the vagina before sex and covers the cervix. Used with spermicide, it prevents sperm from getting through the cervix to fertilize an egg. A cervical cap is smaller than a diaphragm but works in similar ways. It must be used every time you have sex.
Birth Control Sponge	This squishy sponge is placed inside the vagina before you have sex. It delivers spermicide but also blocks the cervix. Unlike the diaphragm, birth control sponges are single-use and disposable.
Sterilization	There are several ways to permanently prevent pregnancy. These are referred to as different types of sterilization. Tubal ligation blocks the fallopian tubes to prevent eggs from getting to a place where they can be fertilized. Vasectomy prevents sperm from being present in the ejaculate.



Questions to Ask Your Doctor

These questions will help you start a conversation with your healthcare provider about what birth control method may be right for you.

About efficacy

- How good is this method at preventing pregnancy?
- Does this method reduce my risk of getting an STD?
- Do any other medications I take affect how well birth control will work?
- What are the pros and cons of this method?

About use

- How often do I have to use this method for it to work properly?
- Will my sexual partner know I'm using this method?
- Are there common mistakes for using this type of birth control?
- Do I have to use it every time I have sex?
- How soon will I need a follow up visit?

About side effects

- Will this affect my sex drive?
- Will this change how often I get my period or my period symptoms?
- Will this affect my mood?
- Are there any other side effects I should know about?
- What symptoms mean I should visit a doctor?

About coping

- Are there options for helping my period symptoms?
- How much will birth control cost?
- What birth control is covered by insurance?
- What should I do if I miss a dose or use my birth control the wrong way?
- Do I need any tests before starting or changing birth control?
