



KNOX COLLEGE D2C PEER EDUCATOR SEX ED SCIENCE FAIR

Tuesday - October 26, 2021, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Ferris Lounge, Seymour Union

Birth Control FAQs

Q: Can I skip my “placebo week” on the pill or the ring?

A: Yes, it's perfectly safe to skip the placebo pills. You can choose not to take them and just bleed, or you can move to the next month's birth control immediately, skipping your period. Every once in a while, however, you should let yourself bleed to clear the lining of the uterus. You may spot, too, if you choose not to take a bleeding week.

Q: How are IUDs inserted and how do they work? Can they fall out?

A: IUDs are inserted at a doctor's office. The feet are placed in stirrups and a doctor opens the vagina with a speculum, clamps the cervix in place with a tenacious, measures the length of the uterus with a small rod inserted into the uterus, and then inserts the IUD through the cervix. Then, the string is cut to a more manageable size and the procedure is over. Some people experience mild to severe cramping for a while afterward, and you can still get your period. Some bodies will reject the IUD, and it can fall out on occasion, but the cervix is very tight.

Copper IUDs can stay in for up to 10 years, and work because copper confuses and disables sperm cells (this is why copper IUDs can also serve as emergency contraceptive). Mirena and Kyleena IUDs are hormonal, and release progestin to stop ovulation and thicken the mucus around the cervix.

Q: How does birth control work? Does it always work?

A: Most birth controls (with the exception of the copper IUD) work by releasing progestin or estrogen into the body, thickening the mucus around the cervix and stopping ovulation. The copper IUD works by disabling sperm cells, which are “allergic” to copper. Most forms of birth control work 95-99% of the time, *if used correctly*. However, there's always a chance of error, so it's best to use a condom as well as birth control if looking to prevent a pregnancy, and always use condoms if looking to prevent STIs.

Q: Is breastfeeding really an effective birth control?

A: If you breastfeed regularly, yes. Breastfeeding is a hormonal process that stops ovulation, if it's done every 4 hours during the day and every 6 hours at night.

Q: What's the best birth control to stop my periods altogether?

A: That depends entirely on your body. All birth controls (besides barrier methods) have the ability to stop bleeding, but none are foolproof. The shot and the implant have the highest reported rate of stopping bleeding, but they also have high rates of other side effects. The best thing to do is talk to your doctor and troubleshoot.

Q: What are normal side effects of birth control and when should I go to the doctor?

A: You should always go to the doctor if your side effects are uncomfortable, so that a record exists of your symptoms and because your doctor may notice patterns that you may not. However, sometimes the doctor is too much work, money, or travel; in that case, seek a doctor when side effects affect your daily life in a significant way, and if you have side effects that are notated as particularly worrisome on the label of your birth control.

Q: Are there birth controls that don't contain estrogen?

A: Yes, plenty! The mini-pill, all IUDs, emergency contraceptive, the implant, and barrier methods (like condoms and diaphragms) are all non-estrogen options. With the exception of the copper IUD and barrier methods, these are all progestin-based.

Q: Does testosterone work as birth control?

A: No. Even though testosterone (in Hormone Replacement Therapy) tends to stop bleeding and ovulation after a while, it is not a sure birth control, and it does not protect against STIs. It is always safest to use a birth control and barrier methods when having sex that could get someone pregnant.

