

# Your Sexual Health



**Women's  
Health**



**Rela  
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**Birth  
Control**



**Men's  
Health**



**STIs**



**Preg  
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**T**he more you know about your reproductive and sexual health, the more likely you are to make healthy choices. Positive and respectful relationships are important to your sexual well-being. In the following pages, you will find information about birth control, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. This booklet is not a substitute for the advice of a health care professional; it is very important to talk to your health care provider about any questions you may have about your sexual health. To learn more about how to talk to your partner, friends, family and health care provider about sexual health and well-being, visit [www.beforeplay.org/](http://www.beforeplay.org/).

## What is family planning?

Family planning means deciding if and when you want to have a child, whether you have already had a baby or not. Preventing an unintended pregnancy or planning the right time to have a baby will put you in control of your sexual health. Family planning lets you:

- Avoid a pregnancy you don't want
- Have a healthy, planned pregnancy only when you are ready to be a parent
- Have children only when you and your partner are ready
- Decrease stress in your sexual relationships
- Reach your education and career goals by avoiding an unintended pregnancy



## What are family planning clinics?

Family planning clinics offer confidential services to protect your sexual health and well-being, including:

- Counseling on the best method of birth control for you
- Pregnancy tests and referrals to health care providers
- Male and female sexual health exams
- Pap tests (a screening for cervical cancer)
- Tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Tips on planning a healthy pregnancy
- Information on infertility and referral to a health care provider if needed

***A physical exam is not required to start using most birth control methods.***



## How much do family planning services cost?

Many family planning clinics offer birth control, STI testing and other services free or at a low-cost depending on how much money you earn.

## Where can I find a family planning clinic?

To find a clinic that offers free or low-cost services, use the clinic locator at [www.beforeplay.org](http://www.beforeplay.org) and look for the low-cost flag.

## What happens at a family planning visit?

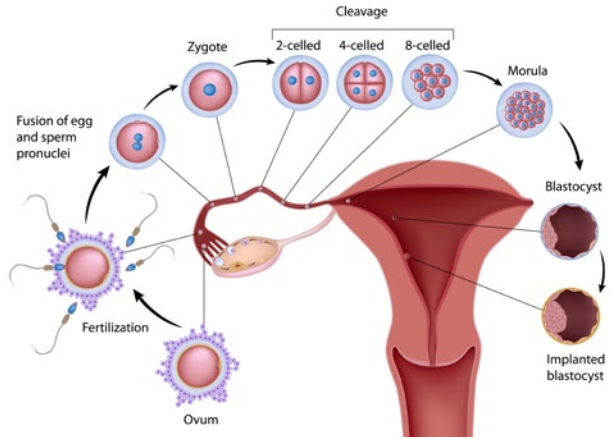
- You will be asked to fill out some papers, including your health history, income and family size.
- Clinic staff will talk to you about what you need and give you helpful information about your health
- You may have a physical exam
- You may have a lab test





## How does pregnancy happen?

Once a woman reaches puberty, an egg is released from her ovary once a month—a process called ovulation. The egg travels from the ovary to the uterus through the fallopian tube. If a woman has unprotected sex during ovulation, or even a few days before or after, the sperm from the male can fertilize the egg and result in a pregnancy.

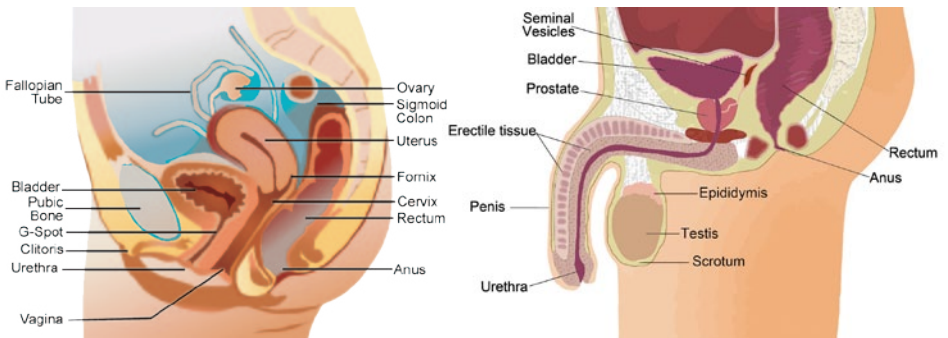


If fertilization does not occur within a day or two of ovulation, the body will shed the egg and the lining of the uterus when a woman has her period. This process, called menstruation, usually happens about two weeks after ovulation.

Every woman's body is different and it is possible for a woman to get pregnant even when she is having her period, is breastfeeding, has never had sex before or has just had a baby.

When a man reaches puberty, the male sex organs begin to produce sperm. Sperm are the cells that fertilize the woman's egg. Once sperm are ejaculated they can live for about 48–72 hours—that's three days!

It's important to talk with your partner about family planning and share the responsibility. You can decide together what the best choices are for each of you. If you need help starting the conversation, check out conversation starters and tips on how to talk to your partner at <http://www.beforeplay.org/get-talking/>.

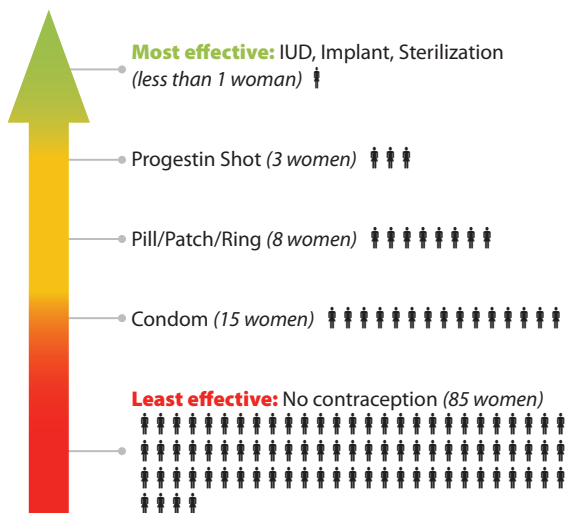


## What are the different types of birth control?










The following tables show how effective, safe and easy each birth control method is for you. You can use these tables and talk to your health care provider to decide which method is best for you. Abstinence is when a couple does not have sex. It is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy if practiced 100% of the time.

### Birth Control Method Effectiveness

How many women out of 100 get pregnant in 1 year with typical use?



Birth control method	How to use it	What's good about it	Things to think about	
M O S T  E F F E C T I V E	<b>Female Sterilization</b>	Health care provider surgically cuts or blocks tubes.	Permanent. Most effective.	Not a good method if you think you'll want to have a baby.
	<b>Male Sterilization</b>	Health care provider surgically cuts and blocks tubes.	Permanent. Most effective.	Not a good method if you think you'll want to have a baby.
	<b>Implant</b>	Health care provider inserts one plastic rod under skin of the inner arm.	Works for 3 years. Very effective. You do not have to think about birth control.	May cause irregular bleeding.
	<b>IUD—Mirena®</b>	Health care provider places a T-shaped device in your uterus that releases a small amount of hormone.	Works for 5 years. Very effective. Light or no periods. You don't have to think about birth control.	May cause irregular bleeding or spotting or no bleeding.
	<b>IUD—ParaGard®</b>	Health care provider places a T-shaped copper device in your uterus.	Works for 10 years. Very effective. You don't have to think about birth control.	May make periods heavier. May increase cramping with periods.
<b>IUD—Skyla™</b>	Health care provider places a T-shaped device in your uterus that releases a very small amount of hormone.	Works for 3 years. Very effective. You don't have to think about birth control.	May cause irregular bleeding or spotting or no bleeding.	

	Birth control method	How to use it	What's good about it	Things to think about
E F F E C T I V E	<b>Progestin shot</b> 	A shot every three months.	Few or no periods.	May cause irregular bleeding or spotting or no bleeding, weight gain or a temporary decrease in your bone density.
	<b>Ring</b> 	You place the ring into your vagina once a month.	Lighter, more regular periods and less cramping.	May cause headaches, breast tenderness or nausea. May increase risk of blood clots in your veins.
	<b>Patch</b> 	You place a patch on your skin once a week.	Lighter, more regular periods and less cramping.	May cause headaches, breast tenderness or nausea. May increase risk of blood clots in your veins.
	<b>Pill</b> 	You take a pill the same time every day.	Lighter, more regular periods and less cramping.	May cause headaches, breast tenderness or nausea. May increase risk of blood clots in your veins.
	<b>Progestin-only "mini pills"</b> 	You take a pill the same time every day.	OK to use soon after delivery and during breastfeeding.	May cause irregular bleeding or spotting or no bleeding.
L E S S E F F E C T I V E	<b>Male or female condoms</b> 	Use every time you have sex.	Helps protect against sexually transmitted infections. No hormones.	Must use every time you have sex to be effective. Use latex or polyurethane condoms.
	<b>Diaphragm or cervical cap</b> 	You insert in your vagina before you have sex.	No hormones.	Must use every time you have sex to be effective.
	<b>Spermicides</b> 	You place in your vagina before you have sex.	No hormones.	Must use every time you have sex to be effective. Should not be used by those who are at risk for HIV.
	<b>Natural family planning</b> 	You don't have sex or you use a barrier method during the woman's fertile time of the month.	No side effects.	May be difficult to determine woman's fertile time of the month.

## Where can I find out more about birth control?

Information about birth control can be found at these web sites:

<http://www.beforeplay.org/>

<http://www.hhs.gov/opa/reproductive-health/>

## What is emergency contraception?

If you have had unprotected sex or you make a mistake using your birth control, emergency contraception helps lower your chances of getting pregnant.



What types of emergency contraception are available?

You can either take emergency contraception in pill form or by getting a copper IUD inserted. Ask your health care provider about how effective these options are and about possible side effects.

## When can I use emergency contraception?

Emergency contraceptive may be effective up to 120 hours after having unprotected sex. **For best results, it should be used as soon as possible.**

## Where can I get emergency contraception?

You can get emergency contraception at most family planning clinics.

Men and women can purchase emergency contraception pills over the counter at most pharmacies. A prescription is needed from your health care provider if you are under 15 years old.







## What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

STIs are infections passed to a sexual partner during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Having an STI can increase a person's risk of getting or spreading HIV.

To learn more about STIs symptoms, testing and treatment, go to [www.beforeplay.org/stds/](http://www.beforeplay.org/stds/).

## How do I know if I have an STI?

**You must get tested to find out if you have an STI.** Many times, you can't feel or see an STI, so you don't know if you have one. Many people have STIs without knowing it, so it is important for you and your partner to get tested.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea tests can be done using a urine specimen or by swabbing your vagina—you don't need an exam for these tests.

## Where can I get tested?

Family planning clinics can test for many STIs. You can also visit an STI clinic or your health care provider. If you test positive for an STI, your health care provider can give you information about treatment.

## How can I protect myself and my partner from STIs?

- Practice abstinence or limit the number of sexual partners you have.
- Use condoms every time you have sex.
- Make sure you and your partner get tested and, if necessary, treated.
- You can get vaccinations for HPV (up through 26 years old) and Hepatitis B.



## Sexually Transmitted Infections

Infection	Symptoms	Complications	Effect on pregnancy	Treatment
Chlamydia	Usually no or mild symptoms or: Men: discharge, burning. Women: discharge, burning, pelvic pain, bleeding between periods.	Pelvic infection. Damage to a woman's fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility, ectopic pregnancy.	Can lead to premature delivery. Infection can be passed to the baby during delivery and cause eye or lung infections in the baby.	Antibiotic treatment.
Gonorrhea	No or mild symptoms or burning, pain, discharge. Women can have bleeding between periods.	Pelvic infection. Damage to a woman's fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility, ectopic pregnancy. Infection in men's testicles. If not treated, it can spread to blood or joints—this can be life threatening.	Infection can be passed to the baby during delivery.	Antibiotic treatment.
Genital Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)	Most people do not have symptoms. Some may get genital warts.	Cervical cancer and less common cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus and throat.	On rare occasions, a woman can pass HPV to her baby during delivery, causing warts in the baby's throat.	There is no treatment for the virus itself. Warts can be removed. Routine Pap tests and follow up can help prevent cervical cancer. Ask about the vaccine to prevent HPV infection.
Molluscum Contagiosum Virus	Small fleshy bumps on the thighs, buttocks, groin and lower abdomen. Bumps can itch.	People with HIV/AIDS may have a worse outbreak.		Bumps will go away on their own or can be removed.
Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)	No symptoms or vaginal discharge with odor, burning and itching.	Can sometimes cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Can increase a woman's susceptibility to HIV. Increases the chance that an HIV infected woman can pass HIV to her sex partner.	May increase the risk of an early delivery or low birth weight baby.	Antibiotic treatment.
Genital Herpes (HSV)	No symptoms or painful blisters around genitals, rectum or mouth (outbreak). Flu like symptoms may occur with the first outbreak.	Can be spread to other parts of the body if a person touches the sores and then touches another part of his or her body.	Can sometimes lead to miscarriage or early birth. Can be passed from mother to baby and cause a serious life threatening infection in the baby.	There is no treatment to cure herpes. Antiviral medications can prevent or shorten outbreaks.
Trichomoniasis	No symptoms or itching, burning and discharge.	May increase the risk of getting other STIs.	May cause early delivery or low birth weight baby.	Antibiotic treatment.

Infection	Symptoms	Complications	Effect on pregnancy	Treatment
Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). Infection of uterus, fallopian tubes, and other pelvic organs	Mild to severe lower abdominal pain. Abnormal vaginal discharge, painful intercourse, irregular bleeding, fever.	Damages fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility and risk for tubal pregnancy. Chronic pelvic pain.	Serious infection for the mother and baby.	Antibiotic treatment. Women with serious PID may need to be hospitalized.
Hepatitis B	A contagious liver disease with symptoms from mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness.	Severe liver disease.	Can pass infection on to baby.	There is no treatment that cures the virus that causes Hepatitis B. Ask about the vaccine to prevent Hepatitis B.
Syphilis	First stage symptoms: single or multiple painless sores where Syphilis entered the body. If not treated, second stage symptoms include skin rashes and/or sores in the mouth, vagina or anus. These symptoms go away on their own, but the infection does not go away without treatment.	Serious health problems affecting internal organs such as the brain, heart, liver and bones if not treated. Can lead to death.	Can infect baby in the womb and cause serious problems or death.	Antibiotic treatment.
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)	May have no symptoms early in the infection. A few weeks to three months after getting HIV, symptoms can include flu like symptoms such as fever and chills, rash, night sweats, muscle aches, sore throat and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms may go away and not recur for 10 years or longer.	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) symptoms include fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, night sweats, wasting syndrome. Can lead to death.	HIV can be passed to the baby during pregnancy, vaginal delivery and breastfeeding. The risk of transmitting the infection to the baby can be reduced with antiviral drug treatment, cesarean section and not breastfeeding.	There is no treatment that cures the virus that causes HIV/AIDS. There are drugs available to manage the infection.

## Where can I find out more about STIs ?

[www.cdc.gov/std/](http://www.cdc.gov/std/)  
[www.beforeplay.org/stds/](http://www.beforeplay.org/stds/)

## Pelvic exams and Pap tests

Pap tests check the cells from the cervix. The test can show changes that may be signs of pre-cancer or cancer of the cervix. HPV, a common viral infection, causes most cervical pre-cancers or cancers. Women should get a Pap test at a family planning clinic. The test can find a problem early, when it is easiest to cure. A Pap test is done as part of a pelvic exam. Women should get routine Pap tests every three years starting at age 21 years. Women 30 years and older have the option of a Pap test every 5 years if a HPV test is done at the same time.

## Breast exam

A breast exam checks for signs of cancer, such as a lump, in the breast. Your health care provider can tell you how often you should have a breast exam at the clinic.

Women should be aware of changes in their breasts and see their health care provider for changes such as a lump, redness or dimpling of the skin, abnormal nipple discharge, or nipple retraction (your nipple turns inward). Women may wish to examine their own breasts. Your health care provider can explain the benefits and limits of breast self-exam and how to do a breast self-exam.

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast to look for cancer. Your health care provider can explain the benefits and limits of a mammogram and what age you should start to have regular screening mammograms.



## Testicular exam

A testicular exam checks for signs of cancer (usually a lump) on the testicles. Testicular cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer for men under 40 years. Men can have a testicular exam done as part of a routine exam at a family planning clinic. Your health care provider can tell you how to do a testicular self-exam.

## Planning for Pregnancy—Do you want to get pregnant now or in the future?

You and your baby can benefit from good health before pregnancy. Healthy habits can help a woman have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby. It is important to men to be healthy before making a baby, too. To learn more about planning for pregnancy, visit:

[www.beforeplay.org/overview/pregnancy/](http://www.beforeplay.org/overview/pregnancy/)  
[www.cdc.gov/preconception/overview.html](http://www.cdc.gov/preconception/overview.html)

### Tips for a healthy you and a healthy baby

Men and women should try to reach and maintain a healthy body weight before and during pregnancy.

### Immunizations

Make sure you are up to date on immunizations before pregnancy. A flu shot is recommended for everyone age 6 months and older every year. Be sure your other shots are up to date also, so you do not get infections such as rubella (German measles), chickenpox and whooping cough. Certain vaccines such as measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), chickenpox and the nasal spray flu vaccine are live vaccines and should not be given during pregnancy. If a woman gets these vaccines, she should ask how long to wait before she gets pregnant.







## Healthy Eating

Go to the Choose My Plate web site for tips on healthy eating: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Limit junk food and fast food.

Folic acid is a B vitamin that can help prevent birth defects of a baby's spine and brain. A woman should get 400 micrograms of folic acid every day, even if she isn't planning a pregnancy any time soon. The easiest way to get folic acid is to take a multivitamin each day. Good food choices include whole grain breads and cereals, leafy green vegetables, beans and citrus fruits like oranges or grapefruits.

## Physical Activity

Physical activity is important. Get at least two and a half hours of moderate—or an hour and 15 minutes of vigorous—physical activity each week. Also do muscle strengthening exercises on two days each week. You can break your activity up into smaller chunks of time during the day. As long as you're doing your activity at a moderate or vigorous effort for at least 10 minutes at a time.

Go to the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html> or the American Heart Association at [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/StartWalking/American-Heart-Association-Guidelines-for-Physical-Activity\\_UCM\\_307976\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/StartWalking/American-Heart-Association-Guidelines-for-Physical-Activity_UCM_307976_Article.jsp) for information on physical activity.



## Tobacco, alcohol & drugs

Tobacco, alcohol and street drugs are harmful during pregnancy. Stop using these substances before a pregnancy. There is help available if you are having a hard time quitting smoking, drinking or doing drugs. Your health care provider can give you information and resources in your community.

Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>, <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/>, <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> or call 1-800-662-4357, <https://www.coquitline.org/> or call 1-800-784-8669 for more information.

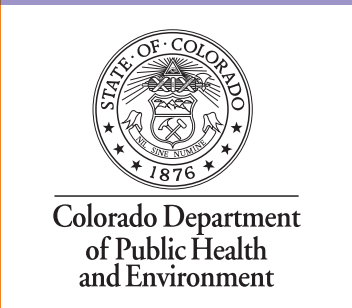
## Abuse & violence

Get help for violence. If someone is violent against you or you are violent toward others, there is help available in your community. Talk to your health care provider.

Information can also be found at <http://www.ccadv.org/>, <http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/violence/index.htm> or <http://www.thehotline.org>.

The content in this booklet is based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other trusted resources.

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Colorado Department  
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