Pregnancy Prevention

When talking about pregnancy prevention effectiveness, two statistics are usually given: effectiveness with correct use, and effectiveness with incorrect use.

**What is correct use?**
Using a birth control method perfectly, 100% of the time. *For example,* always wearing a condom during vaginal sex maximizes the effectiveness of the condom.

**What is incorrect use?**
Failing to follow the directions 100% of the time. *For example,* skipping the pill for several days and then having sex reduces the effectiveness of the pill.

### MALE CONDOMS

*What it is:* A sheath of thin latex, lambskin, polyurethane or polyisoprene worn on the penis during sex.

*Effectiveness:* Correct use: about 98%, but with incorrect use only 82%.

*Risks:* None, unless allergic to latex.

*Cost:* Starting at less than $1 per condom.

*Helps reduce the risk of STIs?* Yes, except: (1) lambskin condoms do NOT prevent HIV, (2) Nonoxynol-9 can increase the chance of HIV, and (3) oil-based lubricants damage condoms—use water-based with condoms.

### THE DIAPHRAGM

*What it is:* A shallow cup that a woman inserts with spermicide into the vagina to cover the cervix before sex.

*Effectiveness:* Correct use: about 94%, but with incorrect use only 88%.

*Risks:* No serious risks, though women using the diaphragm may be more likely to develop urinary tract infections.

*Cost:* An exam ($50 to $200) plus the one-time purchase of the diaphragm ($15 to $75), and the occasional purchase of spermicide ($8 to $17).

*Helps reduce the risk of STIs?* No
THE PILL

What it is: A daily medication that women take to keep their ovaries from releasing eggs.

Effectiveness: Correct use: about 99%, but with incorrect use only 91%.

Risks: As with any medication, there may be side effects, including bleeding between periods, nausea and vomiting. In general, the pill is considered very safe.

Cost: An exam ($35 to $250) plus a monthly prescription cost ($15 to $50).

Helps reduce the risk of STIs? No

IUD

What it is: The intrauterine device (IUD) is a t-shaped device inserted into the uterus. The hormonal IUD can last for five years, while the copper IUD can last for twelve years.

Effectiveness: About 99.5%.

Risks: The IUD is considered very safe, though it may cause heavier periods.

Cost: The exam, the IUD, the insertion of the IUD and any follow-up visits can cost $500 to $1,000.

Helps reduce the risk of STIs? No

THE SHOT

What it is: A hormone injection which prevents pregnancy for three months.

Effectiveness: Correct use: about 99%, but with incorrect use only 94%.

Risks: As with any medication, there may be side effects, including irregular bleeding. In general, the shot is considered very safe.

Cost: An exam ($35 to $250) plus four doctor's visits per year ($55 to $150 each).

Helps reduce the risk of STIs? No
THE PATCH

What it is: A thin patch which releases hormones; it is worn on a woman’s body for three weeks each month.

Effectiveness: Correct use: 99%, but with incorrect use only 91%.

Risks: As with any medication, there may be risk, but the patch is considered very safe.

Cost: an exam ($35 to $250) plus a monthly prescription cost ($15 to $80).

Helps reduce the risk of STIs? No

ABSTINENCE

What it is: Abstaining from vaginal intercourse.

Effectiveness: 100%.

Risks: No risk.

Cost: $0.

Helps reduce the risk of STIs? Yes

PERMANENT METHODS

What it is: For women, a surgical procedure which closes or blocks the fallopian tubes. For men, a surgical procedure which closes or blocks the tubes that carry sperm.

Effectiveness: About 99.8%.

Risks: Surgery always carries risks, but the biggest consideration is whether you are certain that you don’t want biological children in the future.

Cost: $350 to $1,000 for men, $1,500 to $6,000 for women.

Helps reduce the risk of STIs? No