Birth Control THE CHOICE IS YOURS

You can decide if and when to have children. If this is not the right time for you and your partner to have a baby, there are ways you can prevent pregnancy. The surest way to prevent a pregnancy is to not have sexual intercourse. But if you do have sex, you can choose to use one of the birth control methods listed below:

- Male or female condoms
- Spermicide
- Diaphragm
- Birth control pills
- Depo (or “the shot”)
- Patch
- Vaginal ring
- Implant
- IUD
- Natural family planning
- Cycle beads
- Emergency contraception

Which one is best for you? The best method of birth control is the one that you can use the right way every time you want to prevent pregnancy. To help you decide, think about what’s right for you:

- How important is it that you don’t get pregnant now? How well does it work?
- How often do you have sex? Is it planned or unplanned?
- How often will you need to use this method? Will you remember to take or use it every time?
- Is this method safe for you? Are there any side effects?
- Does it protect against HIV and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases)?
- Does your partner need to cooperate for the method to work?
- Would anyone be angry or try to hurt you for using birth control?
- Does this method fit with your religious or moral beliefs?
- How much does it cost? Will your health insurance cover it?
- How does it work? Will it be easy to use?
- Will you feel comfortable using it?
- Will you use it?

Your partner or parents may be able to help you choose what’s right for you. You may want to try different methods to learn what works best for you and your partner. You can also ask your provider for help talking to your partner about using condoms or birth control.

If you are being forced to have sex, or are afraid that someone may harm you for using birth control to keep from getting pregnant, you can tell your provider or call a Rape Crisis Center Hotline for help: 1-800-841-8371 (English, translation available); Spanish: 1-800-223-5001; TTY: 617-492-6434.

For more information about how effective a method is, what kinds of side effects it might have, and how to use it correctly, ask your doctor, nurse, midwife, or family planning counselor (health care provider). Or call 617-624-6060 or go to www.mass.gov/dph/familyplanning to find a provider near you.
Barrier Methods

These methods prevent pregnancy by putting up a block (barrier) that keeps the man’s sperm from reaching the woman’s egg.

Condoms (for men): A condom is a thin latex or plastic cover that is rolled onto the erect penis before sex to keep sperm from entering the vagina. You can buy condoms at any drugstore. Health care centers may have free or low cost condoms.*

Female Condoms (for women): The female condom is a plastic pouch with a flexible ring at each end. The closed end is put into the vagina. The open end stays just outside the vagina. The female condom keeps sperm from entering the vagina. Some drugstores sell female condoms. Health care centers may have free or low cost condoms.*

Diaphragm (for women): The diaphragm is a flexible, round rubber cup that covers the woman’s cervix (the opening to the uterus) that prevents semen from entering the uterus. You put spermicide in the diaphragm and then put it in the vagina before having sex. Spermicide kills sperm. You must leave the diaphragm in for at least 6 hours after sex. A doctor or nurse must examine you to be sure you get the right size diaphragm.

Spermicides (for women): Spermicides prevent pregnancy by killing sperm. Spermicides come in different forms such as foams, jellies, creams, sponges and contraceptive film. You must put spermicides into the vagina before sex. You can buy spermicides at any drugstore. Spermicides work best when used with a condom or diaphragm.

To prevent HIV and other STDs, use a condom
Latex or plastic condoms are the only kinds of birth control that are also highly effective in preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). If you use other types of birth control but also want protection against HIV and other STDs, use a condom in addition to the birth control method you are using.

Birth control after having a baby
If you have just had a baby or are breastfeeding now, you may still need to use birth control to prevent pregnancy. Ask your doctor or nurse about which types of birth control you can use so that you don’t get pregnant again until you want to.

Emergency contraception
Emergency contraception can prevent pregnancy after sex, but only if you use it as soon as possible – within a couple of days. If you had unprotected sex (sex without using birth control), were forced to have sex, or think your birth control method didn’t work, you may be able to use emergency contraception.

*Latex and plastic condoms can also prevent HIV and other diseases spread through oral, vaginal and anal sex. ‘Natural skin condoms’ are not recommended for disease prevention.

CAUTION: Spermicides prevent pregnancy but may increase your risk of HIV. Spermicides contain a chemical (Nonoxynol-9) that can irritate the skin in or around the vagina. If you want to use spermicides to prevent pregnancy, talk to your doctor or nurse about your HIV risk.
Hormonal Methods

These methods use hormones to stop eggs from being released or make it harder for sperm to reach an egg.

The Implant (for women): The implant is a small, thin plastic device that contains a hormone that can prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years. A doctor or nurse puts the implant under the skin of a woman’s upper arm. The implant must be taken out of your arm by a doctor or nurse when you are ready to stop using it.

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The Shot or “Depo” (for women): A doctor or nurse gives you a shot (injection) of a hormone to prevent pregnancy for 3 months. You must get a shot every three months for this method to keep working. These methods use hormones to stop eggs from being released or make it harder for sperm to reach an egg.

Birth control after having a baby
If you have just had a baby or are breastfeeding now, you may still need to use birth control to prevent pregnancy. Ask your doctor or nurse about which types of birth control you can use so that you don’t get pregnant again until you want to.

Vaginal Ring (for women): This clear, flexible ring contains hormones that prevent pregnancy. You put it into your vagina and leave it in for 3 weeks. On the 4th week you take out the ring and your period will start. At the end of the 4th week you put in a new ring, and start the process over again. You cannot get a vaginal ring without a prescription from a nurse or doctor.

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The Patch (for women): The patch contains hormones that prevent pregnancy. You stick a patch to your skin and change it once a week for 3 weeks. The 4th week you do not use a patch and your period will start. At the end of the 4th week you put on a new patch, and start the process over again. You cannot get the patch without a prescription from a nurse or doctor.

Birth Control Pills (for women): Birth control pills contain hormones that prevent pregnancy. You must take a pill every day. When you get to the end of your pack of pills, your period will start. Soon after, you must start a new pack of pills. You cannot get birth control pills without a prescription from a nurse or doctor.
Other Methods

**INTRAUTERINE METHODS:** These methods are put inside a woman’s uterus to keep the egg and sperm from meeting.

**IUD (for women):** IUD stands for intrauterine device. An IUD is a small device made of plastic that is put inside a woman’s uterus by a doctor or nurse. There are two types of IUDs. One contains copper and the other contains a hormone to prevent pregnancy. An IUD may be left in place for 3-10 years, depending on the type.

**PERMANENT METHODS:** These methods last for the rest of your life. They are for people who are sure they will never want to have children in the future.

**Tubal Ligation and Essure® (for women):** Tubal ligation (“having your tubes tied”) and Essure® are two different medical procedures for blocking the woman’s fallopian tubes so that eggs cannot meet sperm. Both procedures must be done by a doctor.

**Vasectomy (for men):** Vasectomy is an operation done by a doctor. The man’s tubes that carry sperm are cut or blocked so that sperm is not released when the man ejaculates (cums) during sex.

**BEHAVIORAL METHODS:** Partners must be able to talk to each other and work together for these methods to work best.

**Abstinence (for women and men):** Abstinence means not having sexual intercourse at any time. For some people, not having sex is the best way to prevent a pregnancy. Practiced correctly, abstinence is very effective at preventing pregnancy, HIV and other STDs.

**Natural Family Planning (for women and men):** A doctor or nurse teaches you to keep track of the monthly changes in your menstrual cycle, so you can try to predict which days you are most likely to get pregnant. You and your partner can then prevent pregnancy by using a barrier method of birth control or not having sex on the days when you are most likely to get pregnant.

**Cycle beads (for women):** Cycle beads are a string of colored beads that you can use to keep track of which days you are most likely to get pregnant if you have sex. Every day you move a ring around the beads to count the days of your menstrual cycle. On the days that you are most likely to get pregnant, you and your partner must not have sex, or must use a barrier method to prevent pregnancy.

**Other options:** Talk to your provider about how and when breastfeeding and withdrawal can lower your chances of getting pregnant. When used correctly, these options can help to prevent pregnancy, but may work best when used with another method.

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Emergency contraception
Emergency contraception can prevent pregnancy after sex, but only if you use it as soon as possible – within a couple of days. If you had unprotected sex (sex without using birth control), were forced to have sex, or think your birth control method didn't work, you may be able to use emergency contraception.
Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception (EC) can prevent pregnancy after sex, but only if you use it as soon as possible—within a few days. You may be able to use EC if you:

- had unprotected sex (sex without using birth control)
- were forced to have sex, or
- think your birth control method didn’t work (for example, the condom broke, you forgot to take your birth control on time, etc.).

**Emergency IUD insertion (for women):**
Within 5 days of unprotected sex, you can have an IUD inserted to prevent pregnancy. The IUD is a small device made of plastic and copper that is put inside a woman’s uterus by a doctor or nurse. Because the IUD can prevent pregnancy for up to ten years (or until it is removed), this safe and highly effective birth control method may also be the cheapest way to prevent pregnancy over time.

**Emergency Contraceptive (EC) pill (for women):**
Sometimes known as “the morning-after pill” or Plan B®, the EC pill is a single dose birth control pill that prevents pregnancy after sex. EC can work up to 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected sex but it works best when you take it within the first 12 hours after unprotected sex.

Men and women of all ages can buy EC pills quickly from most drugstore shelves or counters without seeing a doctor first.

- Women can get an IUD or EC pills from a doctor or family planning clinic. Ask your provider today if you’d like an extra pack of EC pills to take home for future use.
- Women and others that need help getting a low cost prescription method can go to a specially trained pharmacist: mass.gov/emergencycontraception
- If you go to your provider, insurance can be used to cover costs, while keeping the reason for your office visit private.

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For more information about how effective a method is, what kinds of side effects it might have, and how to use it correctly, ask your doctor, nurse, midwife, or family planning counselor (health care provider).

To find other counseling programs and services near you, call (English, translation available):

- HIV/AIDS/STD Hotline: 1-800-235-2331
  TTY: 617-437-1672
- Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-877-785-2020
  TTY: 1-877-521-2601
- Rape Crisis Hotline: 1-800-841-8371 (English) 1-800-223-5001 (Spanish)
  TTY: 617-492-6434

ASK YOUR PROVIDER OR PHARMACIST ABOUT EC TODAY to quickly and easily get the most effective method for the best price when you need it. Don’t wait! Take EC as soon as possible after unprotected sex.
Massachusetts Family Planning Programs
Provide These Services:

- Birth control information and supplies
- Breast exams, Pap smears and other medical exams
- Pregnancy testing and counseling
- Testing and treatment for STDs
- Information, counseling and testing for HIV
- Emergency contraception

These services are confidential and private for all clients, including teens, and may be available at low cost or no cost to you.

GREATER BOSTON
ABCD Family Planning
Greater Boston, Chelsea, Quincy, Revere, and Waltham: 617-348-6251
TTY: 617-423-9215
www.bostonabcd.org

Cambridge Health Alliance
Family Planning
Cambridge, Everett, Malden, Revere, and Somerville: 617-591-6746
www.challiance.org

Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center
Allston and Waltham: 617-783-0500
www.jmschc.org

Manet Community Health Center
Hull, Quincy, and Taunton: 617-690-6400
www.manetchc.org

Planned Parenthood League of MA
Boston: 617-616-1660 or 1-800-258-4448 TTY: 617-787-3276
www.pplm.org

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS
Harrington Memorial Hospital (clinical referrals and education)
Southbridge: 508-765-9771
www.harringtonswp.org

Montachusett Opportunity Council (clinical referrals and education)
Fitchburg: 978-343-6259
TTY: 978-345-7205
www.mocinc.org

Planned Parenthood League of MA
Fitchburg, Marlborough, Milford, and Worcester: 617-616-1660 or 1-800-258-4448 TTY: 617-787-3276
www.pplm.org

NORTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS
Health Quarters
Beverly, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, and Salem: 1-800-297-PREVENT (1-800-297-7738)
www.healthq.org

SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS
Citizens for Citizens, Inc.
Fall River and Taunton: 508-673-2400
www.cfcinc.org/fp

Health Imperatives
Attleboro, Brockton, Falmouth, Hyannis, Nantucket, New Bedford, Plymouth, Vineyard Haven, Wareham, and Weymouth: 508-583-3005
www.healthimperatives.org

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS
Caring Health Center, Inc.
Springfield: 413-739-1100
TTY: 413-739-1996
www.caringhealth.org

Planned Parenthood League of MA
Springfield: 617-616-1660 or 1-800-258-4448 TTY: 617-787-3276
www.pplm.org

Tapestry Health
Amherst, Greenfield, Holyoke, North Adams, Northampton, Pittsfield, and Springfield: 413-586-2016 or 1-800-696-7752
www.tapestryhealth.org

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1-877-785-2020
TTY: 1-877-521-2601

Rape Crisis Hotline:
1-800-841-8371 (English)
1-800-223-5001 (Spanish)
TTY: 1-888-887-7130

We can help you find someone who can speak to you in your language. If you do not speak English and need to talk to someone in Chinese, you can say “I need to speak to someone in Chinese” (or any other language).

If you are being forced to have sex, or are afraid that someone may harm you for using birth control, you can tell your provider or call the numbers below.

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Massachusetts Department of Public Health • www.mass.gov/dph/familyplanning • 617-624-6060