

We highly discourage jumping straight on the hormonal contraceptive (birth control) train without full informed consent. HCs work by suppressing your body's natural production of estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone (producing a state similar to menopause). HCs work by preventing your body from ovulating, interfering with implantation and/or preventing your cervix from producing fertile-quality mucus. HCs have a long list of side effects, and nutrient depletion. Each type of HCs, such as the two types of pill - oestrogen-progestogen and progestogen only, IUD, injection, the patch, the ring, etc., all have different levels of risks, especially pertaining to mood (anxiety and depression), nutrient deficiencies, lower libido, future fertility and gut health. **Not all HCs are breastfeeding safe.**

Tip - When looking at a HC option, type into a search engine the name of the product and "prescribing information PDF" to see what side effects and contraindications come with the product. Most likely, you would have never seen the information in these documents.

When your goal is to grow your family, take into consideration what spacing you are hopeful for between children. HC use lowers ovarian reserves, taking roughly 6-7 months to normalize post usage. Depending on the type of HC, it can take between 4 to 18 months for your cycles to normalize again, limiting the chance of becoming pregnant while for others they become pregnant the cycle after they stop HCs. However, becoming pregnant immediately after stopping HCs is not recommended as your body is starting from a depleted state. This depleted state can cause complications in pregnancy as minor as nausea/morning sickness and as big as liver associated complications like Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG), Intrahepatic Cholestasis of Pregnancy (IHCP), Pre-eclampsia and Eclampsia, the syndrome of Haemolysis, Elevated Liver Enzymes and Low Platelets (HELLP syndrome) and Acute Fatty Liver of Pregnancy (AFLP).

There is a lot of information out there about the common and not-so-common side effects of HC and one of my favorites is "[The Fifth Vital Sign](#)" by Lisa Hendrickson-Jack. She also hosts the popular podcast "Fertility Friday" if podcasts are your thing and has free resources on her website for you. A secondary resource is the "[Period Repair Manual](#)" by Lara Briden, ND.

Non-hormonal contraceptives are barrier methods, Natural Family Planning (FAM), the pull out method, spermicides and the Copper intrauterine device (IUD). The Copper IUD is included here as it does not have any hormones in it. All of these methods have their risks and benefits as well. For instance, some couples have great success with the "pull out" method where the male partner ejaculates outside of and not near the vagina. This method only works if the male does not have any sperm in his pre-ejaculation fluid and pulls out in time.

In my opinion, the FAM method is the best method for most women to prevent or try to become pregnant. The FAM method tracks your cervical mucus, basal body temperature and position of the cervix. Once you know how to read your body, you'll be able to tell when you are in times of high stress, another body system (like your thyroid) is off and prevent unnecessary hormones from entering your body. This method is 99.3% effective when used correctly. That's pretty awesome considering you are not adding or taking away from your body. Work with a fertility specialist like the FAMM providers or FAM instructors for faster learning and help reading your charts.

I suggest the books above for more knowledge about these contraceptive options and also, "Taking Charge of Your Fertility" by Toni Weschler. Secondary reading would be "The Garden of Fertility" by Katie Singer and "The Complete Guide to Fertility Awareness" by Jane Knight.

There are also more permanent methods like vasectomy for males, hysterectomy, tubal ligation and tubal implants. These options will need to be discussed with your doctor.

There is no correct answer as to what method of birth control (if any) is best for you as that is a personal choice and can change over time. Whatever is best for you, please do your research first and do not blindly accept your provider's opinion on the safety of any method.