

# What is Emergency Contraception (EC)

Emergency contraception can be used to reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex.



Emergency contraception is available to women who are at risk of unintended pregnancy after sexual intercourse.

Emergency contraception works by:

- delaying ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary)
- preventing fertilisation by reducing the movement of sperm through the uterus and Fallopian tubes by causing changes in the lining of the uterus (womb), which prevents implantation of the fertilised ovum

Methods of emergency contraception available in Australia are:

**Emergency contraceptive pills**, commonly called the morning-after pill, are most effective if started within 24 hours after unprotected sex, but can be used up to 5 days later. The sooner they are taken the better.

Emergency contraception pills are readily available, without a prescription, from most chemists. They are also available from FPQ clinics and other sexual health services.

A **copper intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD)** can be inserted up to 5 days after unprotected sex as a very effective emergency contraceptive option. The IUD is not suitable for all women.

IUDs are available from FPQ clinics, some doctors, gynaecologists and fertility clinics.

## Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped latex rubber cap, worn in the vagina during and after sexual intercourse to reduce the risk of pregnancy.

Diaphragms are available in different sizes and there are two types available – arcing or coil spring.

The diaphragm works by:

- fitting inside the vagina to cover the cervix, providing a barrier to prevent sperm entering the uterus (womb) after ejaculation



Diaphragms may be bought from FPQ clinics and most chemists once the correct size and type is known.

## Sterilisation

Sterilisation is a permanent method of contraception. Female sterilisation involves blocking the Fallopian tubes to stop the passage of the ovum. Both surgical and non-surgical methods are available. Male sterilisation (vasectomy) involves an operation on the vas deferens to prevent the passage of sperm.

More information about sterilisation is available from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

## Natural methods of contraception

Natural methods of contraception do not rely on the use of hormones or devices and include the following:

**Natural Family Planning (NFP)** uses awareness of the fertile phase in the menstrual cycle to indicate when sexual intercourse should be avoided to prevent pregnancy.

Further information and local contacts can be found at [www.nfpprog.com](http://www.nfpprog.com) or [www.acnfp.com.au](http://www.acnfp.com.au).

**Breastfeeding – Lactational Amenorrhoea (LAM)** is the use of breastfeeding as a contraceptive method by women who fulfil the following criteria:

- fully breastfeeding and not feeding the baby with any food or milk supplements
- gave birth less than 6 months ago
- menstrual periods have not returned

Breastfeeding has an effect on the production of hormones that reduces the probability of ovulation (egg release) occurring, therefore reducing the chance of a pregnancy.

Contact an FPQ clinic or your doctor for more information or advice.

**Withdrawal** is a method of contraception where the man takes his penis out (withdraws) from the woman's vagina before he ejaculates (comes). It is also known as coitus interruptus.

There are more effective forms of contraception and this method is generally not recommended.

**Remember... even if you are using another method of contraception, only condoms offer protection from both unintended pregnancy and STIs.**

## Where to get help and advice about contraception

- Family planning clinics
- Sexual health clinics
- Women's health centres
- Youth health centres
- Your local doctor
- [www.fpq.com.au](http://www.fpq.com.au)

**Get the facts about contraception from FPQ**

Visit [www.fpq.com.au](http://www.fpq.com.au) or contact one of the following locations:

- Brisbane 07 3250 0240
- Cairns 07 4051 3788
- Townsville 07 4723 8184
- Rockhampton 07 4927 3999
- Bundaberg 07 4151 1556
- Sunshine Coast 07 5479 0755
- Gold Coast 07 5531 2636
- Ipswich 07 3281 4088
- Toowoomba 07 4632 8166

### Disclaimer

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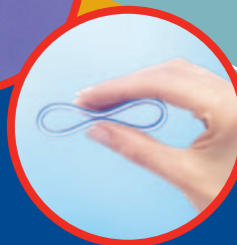
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Version 3 / June 2008

P: 6/2008 10m

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# What is contraception?

Contraception means prevention of pregnancy. There are a number of different methods of contraception and it is important to choose the one that best meets your needs. Using a method you are happy with means you will be able to enjoy sex without the worry of an unintended pregnancy.



## → Combined oral contraceptive pill (The Pill)

The Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill (COC), commonly referred to as 'The Pill', is an oral contraceptive taken daily. It contains the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. These are similar to the hormones naturally produced by the female body.



The Pill works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy

The Pill is available on prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

## → The contraceptive vaginal ring – NuvaRing®

NuvaRing® is a contraceptive vaginal ring which releases a small daily dose of hormones. Once inserted it slowly releases low doses of two hormones, oestrogen and a progesterone, into the bloodstream. These hormones are similar to those naturally produced by the female body and the same as those used in the combined oral contraceptive ('The Pill').



NuvaRing® works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening mucus in the cervix so sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy.

NuvaRing® is available on prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

## → Progesterone-only contraceptive pill (POP)

The POP, sometimes referred to as 'The Mini-Pill', only contains progesterone. Progesterone is similar to the hormone progesterone, which is naturally produced by the female body.

POP works by:

- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy
- affecting ovulation (egg release from the ovary) in some women

POP is available on prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

## → Depo Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (DMPA)

DMPA is similar to the hormone progesterone, which is naturally produced by the female body. DMPA is given by injection into a muscle every 12 weeks and is slowly absorbed into the blood stream to prevent pregnancy. Depo Provera® and Depo Ralovera® are the brand names of DMPA available in Australia.



DMPA works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy

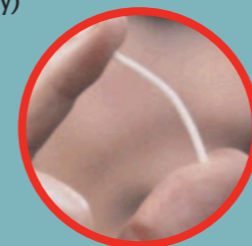
DMPA is available on prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

## → The contraceptive implant – Implanon®

Implanon® is a small flexible rod, which is inserted under the skin of the upper arm. Once inserted it slowly releases a progesterone (similar to the hormone progesterone, which is naturally produced by the female body) into the blood stream to prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years.

The implant works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy



Implanon® is available from FPQ clinics and other doctors and gynaecologists who have had training in insertion and removal of the implant.

## → The progesterone-releasing intrauterine device – Mirena®

Mirena® is a small T-shaped device made of plastic. It contains a progesterone hormone, which is released over time. It is placed inside the uterus (womb), where it releases progesterone to prevent pregnancy for up to five years.

Mirena® works by:

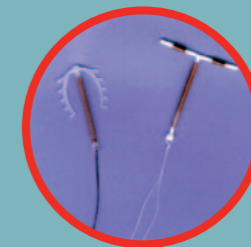
- thickening the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy



Mirena® is available from FPQ clinics, gynaecologists and some doctors.

## → Copper intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD)

The IUD is a small device that is fitted inside the uterus. There are two types of copper IUDs available in Australia – the Multiload Cu 375® and Copper T 380A®. They can be used as contraception for 5 or 8 years respectively. Both are made of plastic and copper.



The IUD works by:

- preventing sperm from moving through the uterus and from fertilising ova (eggs)
- preventing implantation of a fertilised ovum (egg)

IUDs are available from FPQ clinics, some doctors, gynaecologists and fertility clinics.

## → Condoms – male and female

The male condom is a device made of polyurethane or latex rubber which is rolled onto the erect penis before vaginal, anal and oral sex.

The female condom is a device made of polyurethane, about 15 centimetres long, which is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse.

Condoms work by:

- acting as a physical barrier that stops body fluids, eg semen and vaginal fluids, passing between sexual partners. They can only be used once.



**Remember...**  
**even if you are using another method of contraception, only condoms offer protection from both unintended pregnancy and STIs.**

Male condoms are available from FPQ clinics, pharmacies, supermarkets and vending machines. They come in different shapes, flavours, textures, sizes and colours.

Female condoms are available from FPQ clinics and some other sexual health services.

## → So what method to use?

When choosing contraception you should consider:

- its effectiveness
- your lifestyle
- ease of use
- side effects
- cost and availability
- reversibility
- protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- health issues which may limit some choices

Talking with your local Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) clinic or your doctor about all methods will ensure that you have enough information to choose the one that suits you best. You can also refer to FPQ's contraceptive factsheets at [www.fpq.com.au](http://www.fpq.com.au) for more details on individual contraceptive methods.