

Birth Control While Breastfeeding

You can get pregnant again very soon after you deliver your baby. Breastfeeding can delay the release of an egg (ovulation) and return of your period, but you can't know for sure when this will happen. If you don't want to get pregnant again right away, here are ways to delay or prevent it.

Lactational Amenorrhea Method (Breastfeeding as birth control)

- Effective only if your monthly periods have not returned, baby is under six months old, and baby is fully or nearly fully breastfed. This means breastfeeding at least every four hours during the day and at least every six hours through the night and less than two mouthfuls of any other food or drink, including water, formula, juice, or vitamins.
- **No effect on breastfeeding.**
- Begin immediately after birth.
- Effectiveness: 98%

Condoms

Male: Latex or polyurethane covering rolled onto erect penis. Makes a barrier between sperm and egg.

Female: Polyurethane sheath inserted vaginally. Makes a barrier between sperm and egg.

- No effect on breastfeeding.
- Begin any time.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use):
Male, 98% - 85%
Female, 95% - 79%

Birth Control Pill

- Contains two hormones – estrogen and progestin. Stops ovulation, thickens mucus, and changes the lining of the uterus. Take by mouth for 21 or 28 days – repeat.
- **Estrogen often reduces milk supply.** No proven effects from hormones on infant.
- Begin at least six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 99.7% - 92%

Progestin Only Pill (Mini Pill)

- Contains one hormone-progestin. Acts on the lining of the uterus and thickens cervical mucus. Prevents ovulation in 60% of women. Take one pill at the same time each day.
- **Does not affect milk supply.**
- Begin six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 99% - 90%

Patch

Stick on skin externally once a week for three weeks – remove for one week – repeat.

Estrogen often reduces milk supply. No proven effects from hormones on infant.

- Begin at least six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 99.7% - 92%

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Vaginal Ring (Nuva Ring)

- Flexible, soft plastic ring that releases estrogen and progestin. Works like birth control pill - stops ovulation, thickens mucus, and changes the lining of the uterus.
- Wear for three weeks inside the vagina – remove for one week – repeat.
- **Estrogen often reduces milk supply.** No proven effects from hormones on infant.
- Begin at least six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 99.7% - 92%

Injectable (Depo-Provera)

- Needle contains one hormone-progestin. Given by doctor or nurse into muscle every 12 weeks. Works like progestin only pill.
- **Does not affect milk supply.**
- Begin six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 99.7% - 97%

Intra-Uterine Device (IUD)/Intra-Uterine System (IUS)

- A T-shaped piece of plastic inserted into the uterus by a doctor or nurse practitioner.
IUD: Wrapped in copper. Can also be used as emergency contraception up to seven days after unprotected intercourse.
IUS: Contains progestin. Both last from five to eight years
- **No effect on breastfeeding.**
- Inserted six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use):
IUD 99.4% - 99.2%
IUS 99.9%

Spermicides, Foam, Gel, Film, Sponge

- Contain chemicals that kill sperm. Place inside the vagina before intercourse. Gives extra lubrication. Works well when used with other barrier methods.
- Chemical nonoxynol-9 secreted into breastmilk. Effects on infant unknown.
- Begin sponge six weeks after delivery. All others can begin anytime.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): Foam, gel, film 82% - 71%, sponge 80% - 68%

Diaphragm with Spermicide

- Latex or Silicone dome-shaped barrier inserted inside the vagina covering the cervix. Leave in at least six to eight hours after intercourse, but not longer than 24 hours.
- **No effect on breastfeeding.**
- Need to be refitted six weeks after birth.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 94% - 84%

Cap with Spermicide

- Silicone cap is inserted inside the vagina covering the cervix. Blocks sperm from reaching an egg. Leave in at least six to eight hours after intercourse, but no longer than 24 hours.
- **No effect on breastfeeding.**
- Need to be refitted six weeks after birth.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 74% - 68%

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Fertility Awareness Methods

- Female can predict ovulation. Avoid intercourse during this time.
Methods:
 - Calendar rhythm
 - Basal body temperature
 - Billings
 - Symptothermal
- **No effect on breastfeeding.** Difficult to use until the return of ovulation, not recommended until period returns.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 98% - 75%. Depends on method or combination of methods.

Vasectomy (Male Sterilization)

- Doctor cuts tubes that carry sperm from the testicles. May be done in clinic or hospital. Follow up with doctor from sperm count. Permanent.
- **No effect on breastfeeding.**
- Begin anytime. Not immediately effective, another birth control method needs to be used until after medical follow-up.
- Effectiveness (perfect vs. typical use): 98% - 75%. Depends on method or combination of methods.

Tubal Occlusion/Ligation (Female Sterilization)

- Doctor disconnects or blocks the fallopian tubes that carry the egg to the uterus. Surgery takes place at the hospital. Permanent.
- **No effect on breastfeeding.**
- Done during a C-section or within 48 hours of delivery or four - six weeks after delivery.
- Effectiveness 99.5%

Emergency Contraception: Plan B/Combination Pills/IUD

- Use as an emergency method after unprotected sex or if birth control fails.
- Plan B contains progestin only. Take two pills. No effect on breastfeeding.
- Combination pills combine estrogen and progestin. Take four pills.
- Pills are more effective when taken early and within five days of unprotected sex.
- IUD works like regular IUD. No effect on breastfeeding. Must be inserted by a healthcare professional within seven days after unprotected sex.
- Effectiveness:
 - Plan B 89%
 - Combination pills 75%
 - IUD 99%

Always read/Follow the package instructions before using any form of contraception. Combine two or more methods to make birth control more effective.

For more information call Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health at **1-800-265-7293**