

## At-a-glimpse comparison of birth control methods

Method	Effective-ness rate	Most common side effects, risks	Major benefits	Cost, availability
Cervical cap	86% — women who haven't had children; possibly lower in women who have had children	Side effects rare; high failure rate; doesn't protect against STDs	Reusable; reversible	\$69 and up per cap; \$50-\$200 for fitting
Combination birth control pills	92%	Rarely causes life-threatening complications; no STD protection	Highly effective; reversible	\$20-\$50 a month; \$35-\$175 per exam
Condom	85% Up to 95% when used with vaginal spermicide	Latex allergies; interrupts sexual activity; may alter sensation	Proven protection against STDs, including HIV	25 cents to \$1 per condom; OTC
Diaphragm	84%	Side effects rare; interrupts sexual activity; no STD protection	Reusable; reversible; may protect against STDs	\$30-\$50 per diaphragm; \$50-\$200 for fitting
Emergency contraception	98%-99% — Plan B pills; 99% or higher — IUD	Nausea, abdominal pain, fatigue, headache, menstrual changes, no STD protection	Only option for post-sex birth control; highly effective	\$8-\$25 for Plan B pills; \$200-\$400 per IUD
Essure	99% or higher	Short-term procedural discomfort; not immediately effective; difficult to reverse; no STD protection	Highly effective; permanent	\$1,200-\$3,000
Injection	97%	Irregular menstrual bleeding, mild weight gain; no STD protection	Highly effective; reversible	\$60-\$75 per shot; \$35-\$125 per exam
Intrauterine device (IUD)	99% or higher	Increased risk of pelvic infection; expensive if removed early; no STD protection	Highly effective; long-lasting; cost-effective	\$200-\$400 per device; \$50-\$200 per exam
Natural family planning	87% — calendar; 80% — basal body temperature; 78% — cervical mucus; 80-87% symptothermal; 98% — lactational amenorrhea; 88% — standard days	Restricts sexual activity; requires sophisticated knowledge of reproduction; no STD protection	No side effects; immediately reversible	No cost
Progestin-only birth control pills	92%	Irregular menstrual bleeding, mild weight gain; no STD protection	Highly effective, reversible	\$20-\$35 per month; \$35-\$125 per exam
Shield	85%	Side effects rare; relatively high failure rate	Reusable; reversible	\$65 per shield; \$50-\$200 for exam
Skin patch	99%	Rarely causes life-threatening complications; no STD protection	Highly effective; reversible	\$30-\$40 for a month's supply of three patches; \$35-\$175 per exam

Spermicides	71%	Nonoxynol-9 allergies; no STD protection	Easy to use; reversible	\$1-\$1.50 per use; OTC
Sponge	84% Possibly higher in women who have had children	Vaginal dryness, itching or soreness; no STD protection	Easy to use; reversible	\$2.50 for a single sponge
Tubal ligation	99% or higher	Short-term procedural discomfort; potential complications from surgery; difficult to reverse; no STD protection	Highly effective; permanent	\$2,500-\$4,000
Vasectomy	99% or higher	Occasional swelling, bruising of scrotum; rare infection; difficult to reverse; no STD protection	Highly effective; permanent	\$250-\$1,000
Withdrawal	73%	High failure rate; no STD protection	Doesn't require any devices; always available	No cost

Note: OTC means "over the counter."

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[By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

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