

There are several different types of contraception, and it is sometimes difficult to find one that suits you. Every woman is different and what suits one person may not be right for someone else.

This is just a brief guide - much more information can be found at www.contraceptionchoices.org

How long do I need contraception for?

- Most women will need to take contraception up to the age of 55.
- If you are under 50 and your periods stop then you can stop contraception after 2 years of no periods.
- If you are over 50 and your periods stop, you can stop contraception after 1 year of no periods.
- If you are over 50 and on a type of contraception that is stopping your periods (hormonal coil, progesterone-only pill, implant), then we can do a blood test to see whether you are menopausal. If the blood test is in the menopausal range you can stop using contraception in a year.
- HRT is NOT a contraceptive. You may need to use contraception alongside your HRT.

Types of contraception:

Combined oral contraceptive pill

- Contains oestrogen and a progestogen
- Some women cannot take this safely. If you get migraine with an aura, if you or your mother has had a blood clot, or if you are overweight, this is not the safest contraceptive for you.
- Some women feel quite 'hormonal' with this but others find it suits them well.
- This usually gives excellent period control with very little irregular bleeding.
- New 'extended pill taking' regimes can lead to you having very infrequent or no periods.

Progesterone only pill

- The most commonly used of these is made from 'desogestrel' (sold under various brand names such as Cerelle and Cerazette).
- It is taken every day.
- This can be very good to stop bleeding from problem/heavy periods. If you are lucky, you will have no periods at all.
- Some women have constant irregular bleeding with this which can be annoying.
- This is less good at preventing pregnancy than the combined pill, but is still 99% effective with perfect use.

Progesterone - only injection ('Depo')

- There are two popular types of injectable progesterone-only contraception which are used in the UK 'Depo-provera' and 'Sayana Press'
- Depo-provera is an intramuscular injection into the biceps or buttock muscles. It needs to be given every 3 months by a health care professional, usually a practice nurse.
- Sayana Press can be given yourself and is easy to use. It is really useful for women who work full time or travel a lot and find it difficult to see a health care professional.
- After the first injection you may have some irregular bleeding, but this usually settles down, and many women will have no periods at all on this.
- This may have an effect on your bone density as you reach your late 40s although this effect is not clear. For this reason you would need to change at 50 to another method.

Progesterone implant ('Nexplanon')

- This is a small rod which goes under the skin of the upper arm.
- It is incredibly effective at preventing pregnancy and lasts for 3 years.
- Some people will find that their periods stop altogether. Others may get annoying irregular light bleeding.
- It is easy to insert; as easy as having a piercing.

Copper coil (IUD)

- This is a small copper and plastic T-shaped device which is inserted through the cervix into the womb.
- It contains no hormones which makes it popular with women who are sensitive to these.
- It can last for up to 10 years but may make periods heavier and more painful.

Hormonal coil (IUS)

- There are two types of hormonal coil which are commonly used. Both contain a type of progesterone at a very low level.
- Although a small amount of hormone goes into the bloodstream this is much less than the other types of hormonal contraception.
- The Mirena coil has a higher dose of hormone. It is extremely good at controlling heavy or painful periods and many women will find that their periods stop altogether. It can also be used as 'half' of your HRT - providing contraception, as well as protecting your womb lining against the oestrogen.
- The Kyleena coil is half the width of the Mirena and therefore very easy to fit, especially for young women and women who have not had vaginal deliveries. It has less hormone than the Mirena so periods will be lighter but may not stop altogether.

Diaphragm ('Cap')

- This is a flexible device which fits over the cervix. It has to be inserted before sex and is used with spermicide.
- It is only 92-96% effective.
- I do not fit diaphragms as demand is very low. Your local family planning clinic is the best place to try.