

## Contraception - myths and facts

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**Myth:** If your partner withdraws before he ejaculates you won't get pregnant

**Fact:** This so-called 'withdrawal method' is not an effective method of contraception. This is because it's still possible for sperm to be present at the tip of the penis before ejaculation, which can result in a pregnancy.

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**Myth:** You can't get pregnant if it's the first time you have sex

**Fact:** If the egg meets sperm then it's possible to get pregnant, whether or not it's the first time you've had sex.

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**Myth:** Emergency contraception is only effective the morning after unprotected sex

**Fact:** The **emergency contraception** pill (ECP) is sometimes called the 'morning-after-pill'. Although the ECP should be taken as soon as possible, it does not have to be taken in the morning. There are two types of ECP that work for up to four or five days after sex and they are both more effective when taken as soon as possible. The ECP is not an abortion pill. If you are already pregnant, ECP will not work.

ECPs are available from the chemist with no prescription.

A **copper intrauterine devices** is the most effective form of emergency contraceptive if inserted up to five days after unprotected sex, and can provide effective contraception for five years or more.

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**Myth:** Long-term use of contraception can make it harder to get pregnant later

**Fact:** Once women stop using contraception their periods and fertility will usually soon return to what is normal for them.

Exceptions include:

the **contraceptive injection** (Depo-Provera® or Depo-Ralovera® shot) - it can take up to 12-18 months for the hormones to leave your body and for your fertility to be fully restored

**sterilisation** - which is intended to be permanent.

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**Myth:** You can't get pregnant if you're breastfeeding

**Fact:** Many **unplanned pregnancies** happen in the first few months after childbirth.

Breastfeeding exclusively (without supplementing with formula or food) can stop you from ovulating, but even though there's a dip in your fertility at this time, **breastfeeding is not a reliable method of contraception** - it's much safer to arrange other forms of **contraception after giving birth**.

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**Myth:** Intrauterine devices (IUDs) cause infection in the reproductive organs (known as pelvic inflammatory disease or PID)

**Fact:** There is a very small risk of **PID** in the first three weeks after an IUD is inserted.

After that, IUD users have the same risk of developing PID as anyone else. **Sexually transmissible infections (STIs)** are the main cause of PID. Those at risk of STIs will be screened for them before an IUD is inserted.

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Myth: IUDs cause ectopic pregnancy

**Fact:** An IUD reduces the overall chance of pregnancy therefore lowers the overall risk of **ectopic pregnancy**. In the unusual case of a woman becoming pregnant while using LARC, it is recommended to check for an ectopic pregnancy.

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Myth: IUDs cause infertility

**Fact:** In a rare circumstance a complication from a perforation, infection or ectopic pregnancy could affect fertility. However, contemporary IUDs have not been shown to increase infertility. The effects of the IUD wear off very quickly after it is removed.

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Myth: Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) causes menstrual problems

**Fact:** Different types of LARC can cause different menstrual changes. Some women have lighter and reduced cycles when using LARC and welcome this change. Some women who continue to have a period may prefer this, even though it may be heavier in some women.

Your preference for one or the other may dictate which type of LARC you choose.

Accurate information about the available options will help you to make a choice that best suits your circumstances and your current needs.

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Myth: Teenagers prefer condoms and the pill

**Fact:** Studies show that when teens receive accurate information about LARC options they are more likely to use and be satisfied with it. Many teenagers do not know about LARC, or have only heard the myths about it.

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Myth: Parental consent is required

**Fact:** Most young people who require **contraception** are able to obtain it without parental consent. Your GP will explain about the method you choose and check that you have a suitable understanding of it, and that it is appropriate for you.

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Myth: Teenagers and women who have not had a child shouldn't use an IUD

**Fact:** IUDs and contraceptive implants have the highest effectiveness, continuation rates and user satisfaction of all forms of LARC, including for teenagers and women who have not had a child. The IUD is now recommended as a good first choice for women who have not been pregnant or given birth to a baby, and can usually be inserted without difficulty.

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Myth: An IUD should not be inserted immediately after giving birth

**Fact:** Although there is a slightly higher risk of the IUD coming out if it is inserted just after giving birth, the overall risk is low.

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