

Nowadays there is a wide range of contraceptive methods available to women, and new forms of contraception are becoming available on a regular basis. Here is a brief summary of some of the more common methods currently available. This may help you decide on which form of contraception would suit you best. It should be noted that none of these protect you from the risk of sexually transmitted infections. Condoms should always be used in conjunction with the following methods.

Combined Pill

This is one of the best known forms of contraception. It consists of 2 hormones - oestrogen and progesterone – which are taken in the form of one pill orally every day for three weeks, followed by a one week “pill-free” interval. It is a very effective form of contraception if taken correctly. The pill should ideally be taken at the same time of the day. However you have up to 12 hours to remember to take it if you have forgotten. It works by stopping ovulation from occurring. It has few side effects and most young women can safely use it. It is not recommended in women over the age of 35 who are smokers or overweight.

[Read More](#)

Mini Pill

This is an oral form of contraception which contains only progesterone. This is a slightly less effective form of contraception but is ideally suited for women who cannot take the combined pill for instance breast feeding mums, women who smoke over 35, or overweight women. It works by thickening cervical mucus and therefore making a more hostile environment for sperm to survive. It must be taken daily and it can be associated with breakthrough bleeding. Unlike the combined pill, you must take it within the same three hour period every day to ensure maximum contraceptive effect.

[Read More](#)

Patch

This is similar to the combined pill in its hormone content, but it is used as a once weekly patch. This relatively new product has the advantage of not having to remember daily pills. Its effectiveness as a contraceptive is that of the combined pill. Its few side effects include a skin reaction to the patch adhesive in a very small number of patients. The product available in Ireland is called Evra.

Vaginal Ring

This is also a more recent development. The vaginal ring releases hormones similar to the pill and patch forms, is easy to insert by the patient, and is removed after 3 weeks. Following a bleed a new ring is inserted. Its effectiveness as a contraceptive is that of the combined pill. The product available in Ireland is called Nuvaring.

[Read More](#)

Coil

The most popular coil is the Mirena. This is inserted into the womb and remains effective for 5 years. Insertion is usually uncomplicated and relatively painless in women who have had children. It releases progesterone and as a result periods become very light. It is a very effective form of contraception, and fertility returns to normal immediately following removal. Women can experience some irregular bleeding for up to three months after insertion.

[Read More](#)

Diaphragm

This is a small, plastic dome – shaped device which is easily inserted into the vagina prior to intercourse. It must remain in the vagina for 6 hours after intercourse. It should always be used in conjunction with a spermicidal. Its effectiveness is less than that of the hormonal forms of contraception. The advantages of a diaphragm is that it is a barrier form which does not involve hormones, and it may be suitable for women who are having less frequent sexual intercourse and only want to use contraception occasionally.

[Read More](#)

Injectable Contraceptive

High dose progesterone can be given as a three – monthly injection (Depo Provera). This is a very effective form of contraception. It is suitable for most women and is ideal if remembering to take pills is proving difficult. Benefits include lightening or disappearance of periods. Disadvantages include a slight weight gain, and some irregular bleeding initially.

[Read More](#)

Emergency Oral Contraception

This consists of a single dose of progesterone taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. There are very few side effects associated with it. You will get your period as usual when you would expect it. A pregnancy test should be performed if your period does not occur.

[Read More](#)

