

# 17. Preventing pregnancy



## Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- Define contraception.
- List ways young people can prevent pregnancy.



## Background notes

### What is contraception?

Contraception means preventing pregnancy. A contraceptive is a drug, item, or a method used to prevent pregnancy or reduce the chances of getting pregnant without avoiding sexual intercourse. There are many different contraceptive methods. With most methods a woman will be able to become pregnant after she has stopped using it. Some methods, such as sterilization, are permanent, meaning a woman cannot become pregnant ever again. Other words for contraception are birth control and family planning.

All contraceptives are designed to work in one of two ways: either they prevent the man's sperm and the woman's egg from coming together, or they prevent the fertilized egg from implanting in the womb. Contraception allows women and men to determine the number of children they have and when they have them.

Adolescents can safely use any contraceptive method. While all methods are medically safe for young people, some may be more appropriate than others. Sterilization is not a good option for young people because it is permanent.

### Contraceptive choices

There are many different kinds of contraceptive methods. Each of these has their advantages and disadvantages. Some provide temporary contraceptive protection while others are permanent. Some, such as the male and female condom, protect the user against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, while others do not. Some are for women and some for men. Some must be used at the time of sexual intercourse, while others are used independently of intercourse.

Some contraceptive methods work very well at preventing pregnancy and others work less well. How well a method prevents pregnancy depends on how carefully people follow instructions and if they use them all the time. Health workers can explain how to use them. If you are thinking about having sex, you should talk with a health worker to learn about which contraceptive method is best for you. You should not be embarrassed to talk to a health worker. You are showing that you are responsible.

## Contraceptive methods

The following table has information on popular contraceptive methods. Talk with a health worker to learn more about the different ways to prevent pregnancy as well as the advantages and disadvantages of different methods. How well a method works to prevent pregnancy depends on two things: one, how well the method itself works to prevent pregnancy; and two, how well users follow instructions. Some people always use their method correctly, but many users do not.

For many methods, how well it works to prevent pregnancy depends on how well users follow instructions. Remember, only condoms protect against both pregnancy and HIV infection, and only abstinence is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy.

Method	Description	How well does it work?	Why it might be a good choice	Why it might not be a good choice
<b>Abstinence</b>	Do not have sexual intercourse	Perfectly	Best choice to prevent pregnancy and STIs	
<b>Male condom</b>	Soft, rubber tube that fits over erect penis and does not allow sperm to go inside vagina.  If used correctly every time: 3 out of 100 women will become pregnant; if not used correctly 15 out of 100 women will become pregnant.	Well if they are used correctly every time you have sex	Easy to buy and easy to use.  Protects against HIV.	Must be used correctly every time you have sex, which can be hard to do
<b>Female condom</b>	Soft, plastic pouch put inside vagina. Does not allow sperm to go in vagina.  If used correctly every time: 5 out of 100 women will become pregnant; if not used correctly 21 out of 100 women will become pregnant.	Well if they are used correctly every time you have sex	Protect against HIV	Must be used correctly every time you have sex.  Can be expensive.
<b>IUD Intrauterine device</b>	Small item put inside the womb by a trained person. Stops sperm from joining egg or stops fertilized egg from growing in the womb.  1-2 out of 100 women will become pregnant.	Very well	Work very well and can stay in place for 12 years	Does not protect against HIV and other STIs

Method	Description	How well does it work?	Why it might be a good choice	Why it might not be a good choice
<b>Implants</b>	<p>Tiny capsules with artificial hormones put under the skin of the arm. Capsules slowly release hormones and stop ovaries from releasing an egg each month.</p> <p>Not even 1 out of 100 women will become pregnant.</p>	Very well	Work very well and can stay in place for 5 years	Does not protect against HIV and other STIs
<b>Injectables</b>	<p>Artificial hormones injected by a doctor or nurse. Stops ovaries from releasing an egg each month.</p> <p>Not even 1 out of 100 women will become pregnant.</p>	Well	Can get one shot every 3 months	Must remember to go for shots.
<b>Pills</b>	<p>A tablet made of artificial hormones taken by a woman every day. Stop ovaries from releasing an egg each month.</p> <p>3 out of 100 women will become pregnant.</p>	Well	Can make periods easier (less bleeding and cramping)	May not be a good choice for girls under 18. Must remember to take it every day. May cause weight changes, spotting.
<b>LAM Lactational Amenorrhea Method</b>	<p>A temporary method for women who are breastfeeding exclusively. It works for the first 6 months after giving birth if a woman's periods have not started again.</p> <p>2 out of 100 women will become pregnant.</p>	Well	Free and gives baby proper nutrition	<p>Can only be used by women who have given birth.</p> <p>Temporary and if menstruation begins can no longer be used.</p>
<b>Fertility awareness methods</b>	<p>Couples do not have sexual intercourse (or use condoms) on days when the woman is fertile. To know when a woman is fertile she can keep track of her cycle using a calendar, taking her temperature or testing mucus.</p> <p>20 out of 100 women will become pregnant.</p>	Not so well	Free	Must be very familiar with your body. Must have a cooperative partner.

Method	Description	How well does it work?	Why it might be a good choice	Why it might not be a good choice
<b>Spermicides</b>	Chemicals inserted into the vagina before intercourse. They are available in different forms (foam, jellies, film, cream, etc). They block the entrance to the uterus and also kill sperm.  21 out of 100 women will become pregnant.	Not so well	Available from chemists	Must be put in shortly before sex.  May irritate penis and vagina.
<b>Withdrawal</b>	Man pulls his penis out of the vagina before he ejaculates.  About 27 out of 100 women will become pregnant.	Not so well	Free	Difficult to practice.  Requires a lot of self-control by man.



## Session guide

- Facilitate a discussion by asking group members the following questions:
  - What are some of the contraceptive methods that you have heard of?
  - What are some myths that you have heard about contraceptive methods? Use the table above to find out the truth about these methods.
  - Where can you go to get more information about contraceptives?
- After discussing all of the questions, share the information from the Background Notes section.



## Main points

- Contraception means preventing pregnancy.
- A contraceptive is a drug, item, or a method used to help prevent pregnancy when having sexual intercourse.
- Adolescents can safely use any contraceptive method, though some may be more appropriate than others.



## Activity: Contraception true or false

1. Ask group members to stand in the middle of the meeting space.
2. Explain that you will read a statement. If they think it is true they should remain standing. If they think it is false they should sit down.
3. After each statement ask those standing to say why they think it is true. Then ask those sitting why they think it is false.
4. After each side has had a chance to explain their position, read the answer.
5. Ask everyone to stand up again and read the next statement.
6. Follow the same instructions for each statement you read.

Statement	True or false
1. A girl cannot get pregnant the first time she has sex.	<b>FALSE:</b> Any time a girl has sexual intercourse she can get pregnant, even if it is her first time.
2. Condoms have holes that let HIV pass through.	<b>FALSE:</b> Condoms do not have holes that let HIV pass. There are strict rules for making condoms and condoms are tested in the factory to make sure they will work properly. If a condom does not work or breaks, it is almost always because a person is using it wrong, such as using oil-based lubricants; using old, expired condoms; leaving them in the sun or a hot place; or tearing them with your fingernails and teeth when opening the package.
3. Injectable contraceptives can cause infertility.	<b>FALSE:</b> Injectable contraceptives do not cause infertility. Though there can be a delay between the last injection and getting pregnant, women are able to become pregnant after stopping injections.
4. A girl cannot get pregnant if she has sex during her period.	<b>FALSE:</b> A girl may get pregnant at any time during her menstrual cycle, because her period may not be very regular. Also, in some girls and women, emotional stress may bring on ovulation at any time.
5. Some IUDs can be left in place for 10 years.	<b>TRUE:</b> Some IUDs can be left in place for 10 -12 years
6. Since they are taken every day, oral contraceptives (the pill) build up in a woman's body and can make her sick.	<b>FALSE:</b> Pills dissolve in a woman's stomach, just like other medicine. They do not build up in her body and are not poisonous.
7. It is not safe for girls under age 18 to use contraceptives.	<b>FALSE:</b> Contraceptives are medically safe for women at any age. Some are more appropriate than others. For example, sterilization is not a good option for young women because it is permanent and could be regretted.
8. Having sex without a condom can result in HIV infection.	<b>TRUE:</b> If either person is infected, having sex without a condom can infect the other partner. Young men and women have to be very careful and always practice 'safe sex' if they want to have sex.
9. As long as a boy pulls his penis out of the vagina before he ejaculates a girl cannot become pregnant.	<b>FALSE:</b> Before ejaculation the penis releases fluid that may have sperm in it and can cause a girl to become pregnant.
10. A girl of 12 years can become pregnant.	<b>TRUE:</b> Any girl who has begun menstruation can get pregnant, even if she does not yet have regular periods.

# 18. Condoms



## Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- List the steps for proper condom use.
- Explain ways to use condoms so they do not break.



## Background notes

Abstinence is the best and only certain way to prevent STI and HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy. However, if young people have decided to have sexual intercourse or are already sexually active, they should have information about how to use condoms correctly to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. Using condoms the right way every single time you have sexual intercourse reduces the risk of HIV transmission, STIs, and unwanted pregnancy.

There are currently two types of condoms available for use: a male condom and a female condom. A male condom is a soft tube made out of a type of rubber called latex. It is put on a man's erect penis before sexual intercourse. When the man ejaculates, the sperm is deposited in the condom. Because the sperm is collected in the condom, there is no contact between the man's and the woman's body fluids. This reduces the risk of STIs, including HIV, and unwanted pregnancy. Condoms should only be used once and then thrown away.

A female condom is a plastic pouch that goes inside the vagina during intercourse to prevent HIV, STIs, and unwanted pregnancy. Female condoms have two flexible rings, one attached to each end. One ring, at the closed end, is placed inside the woman's vagina and keeps it in place during sex. The other ring at the open end stays outside the vagina and covers parts of the lips of the vagina. It is also used once and then thrown away. The condom catches the man's sperm so that it does not enter the vagina.

Many people are afraid to use condoms because they do not know how to use them or because they are uncomfortable or worried about talking with their partner about using them. Condoms offer protection to both partners. Using a condom is a sign of trust, respect, and caring for your partner.

To protect against pregnancy and HIV, condoms must be stored properly and used the right way every time someone has sex. Latex condoms provide protection against STIs that are transmitted through body fluids, like HIV. They do not protect as well against STIs that are transmitted through skin-to-skin contact (like herpes or warts) because the condom may not cover the entire affected areas.

## Condom facts

- No penis is too big or too small for a male condom. Male condoms can be stretched to fit over an arm.
- Asking a partner to use a condom does not mean you do not trust your partner. You are making a responsible statement about both your futures by using condoms.
- HIV cannot pass through latex or rubber condoms; but, the virus can pass through sheepskin or animal skin condoms.
- There is a correct way to use condoms. Not using a condom correctly may lead to pregnancy or infection with an STI including HIV.
- Never leave condoms near a window, in a wallet, or in your back pocket that you sit on continuously. All these storage methods will cause the condom to tear or lose its lubrication.
- Condoms are tested in the factory. They usually will not break if they are stored properly before they are used. Keep them away from heat or sunshine.

It is very rare for a condom to break or come off when they are used by people who are experienced using condoms. When male condoms do break or slip, it is usually because people were not using them properly. It is important to practice putting a condom on properly. The following tips can help make condoms work best:

- Never open the condom package with sharp objects like teeth, scissors, knives, and pencils.
- Never unroll a condom before putting it on. Condoms should always be unrolled onto the penis, rather than pulled on like a sock.
- Having intercourse for more than 20 minutes or having very intense intercourse can increase the risk that a condom may slip off.
- Carefully check the condom package to be sure that it is not damaged. Check the expiry date on the package. Do not use a condom that is brittle or dry or if it has changed colour.
- Use only water-based lubrication such as K-Y jelly, spermicidal gels or creams, or saliva. Oil-based products such as petroleum jelly, hand lotion, or mineral or vegetable oils should never be used because they can weaken latex, making the condom more likely to break.
- Use a new condom for each act of intercourse. A male condom should never be washed and reused.
- Starting to unroll the condom wrong side out on the penis and then flipping it over to put it on correctly may contaminate the outside of the condom. If this happens the condom should be thrown away and replaced with a new one.
- Many condoms have a space on the end for semen. If the condom does not have one, some recommend holding the end of the condom while unrolling it onto the penis. This creates a space for the semen.



## Session guide

1. Facilitate a discussion by asking group members the following questions:
  - What is the best way to prevent pregnancy and HIV infection? (Answer: Abstinence)
  - Do you think condoms are effective in preventing pregnancy and HIV infection? Why or why not?
  - How do you use a condom?
2. After discussing all of the questions, share the information from the Background Notes section.



## Main points

- **Abstinence is the best and only way to completely prevent STI and HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy.**
- **To protect against pregnancy and HIV, condoms must be stored properly and used the right way every time someone has sex.**