

Contraception



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 **donum vitae** NRW
beraten - schützen - weiter helfen

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Introduction

There are many different contraception methods, but not every method is equally suitable for everyone.

Contraceptive methods include: hormonal and non-hormonal contraceptive methods, long-term methods, barrier methods, chemical or "natural" methods.

Some contraceptive methods interfere more or less with the female body, some have a higher health risk, some are easier to use than others and some may interfere with sexual intercourse. The perfect contraceptive method, which is equally applicable by women and men, inexpensive and free of side effects, unfortunately does not exist.

This brochure gives an overview of the different contraceptive methods. Most contraceptive methods are for women. There are only two for men. Not every method is suitable for every woman or couple, because life circumstances, demands and expectations of the method vary greatly. It is important to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods and see which method fits best in the current life situation.

Competent and factual information is available from gynaecologists or in one of our counselling centres. The counsellors provide individual information about the possibilities of safe contraception.

Costs

Contraceptives generally have to be paid for yourself. Most contraceptives without hormones can be bought directly in drugstores, pharmacies, etc. Hormonal contraceptives, on the other hand, are available only on prescription and require a doctor's prescription to be filled at a pharmacy.

Young women under the age of 22 with statutory health insurance are exempt from the costs of prescription contraceptive methods (pill, patch, hormone implant, IUD) - the costs are usually covered by the health insurance (§24a SGB V). For women over 18, however, there is a prescription fee of 5 - 10 €.

Anyone over the age of 22 must fully pay for contraception themselves. This also applies to social welfare recipients and recipients of citizen's income (Grundsicherung).

In some cities, however, there is a so-called contraceptive fund. Check with a counselling centre to find out whether the costs can be covered locally.

Privately insured persons usually have to cover the costs of contraceptives themselves even before their 22nd birthday. Exceptions are possible with some health insurance companies. It is worth asking.

Contraceptive methods

There are contraceptive methods with and without hormones.

Hormonal contraceptive methods include birth control pills, vaginal rings, contraceptive patches, three-month injections, hormonal implants and hormonal IUDs. Hormonal contraceptive methods are **only** available on prescription. Therefore, **regular visits to** the gynaecological practice are necessary.

Non-hormonal contraceptive methods include copper IUD, copper chain, copper bead ball, barrier methods, chemical methods and fertility awareness methods.

In addition, there is the possibility of sterilisation for both women and men. If this method is chosen, it is usually no longer possible to have or procreate children.

„Coitus interruptus“, also known as "pulling out", is definitely not a method of contraception. Sperm can be released even before ejaculation, through what is known as the so-called "pleasure drop". Fertilization of the egg cell and an unintended pregnancy is therefore possible.

Contraception with hormones



Birth control pills (combined pills)

The contraceptive pill is a hormone preparation, which has to be taken regularly. It contains the female hormones oestrogen and progestogen in different compositions and dosages. There are different pill preparations:

SINGLE-PHASE PILLS

Most single-phase pills contain 21 tablets, each with the same amount of oestrogen and progestogen. This is followed by a seven-day break from taking the pill, during which bleeding begins. The bleeding is usually weaker than a natural period. There are also single-phase pills with 21 or 24 hormone-containing tablets and 7 or 4 hormone-free tablets, so-called placebos. The placebos have a different colour. The continuous intake is necessary to avoid forgetting to take the pill.

MULTI-PHASE PILLS

Two-phase and three-phase pills contain different concentrations of oestrogen and progestogen in one pack. The pills here have different colours and must be taken exactly in the prescribed order. There are also preparations of multiphase pills with placebo tablets.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the preparation and pack size. A three-month pack costs between 20 € and 50 €. Depending on the age, there are additional costs for the prescription fee.

EFFECT

The hormones in the pill work threefold to prevent pregnancy:

1. They inhibit egg maturation so that ovulation does not occur.
2. The mucus in the cervix becomes tough and thick, so that no sperm can enter the uterus and
3. the lining of the uterus builds up less so that a fertilised egg cannot lodge there.

The contraceptive pill is taken in a 24-hour rhythm. Irregular and delayed intake, diarrhoea, vomiting or intake of certain medicines, such as painkillers or sedatives (also St. John's wort) or anti-inflammatory drugs, can impair the contraceptive effect.

SAFETY

The contraceptive pill is one of the safest methods of contraception and is easy to use. To ensure effective protection, it must be taken regularly and correctly.

ADVANTAGES

- Period pain and bleeding intensity almost always decrease and skin conditions such as acne can improve.
- Large selection of different preparations.
- The contraceptive method can be stopped at any time.

DISADVANTAGES

- Daily intake must always be remembered.
- The most common side effects are nausea, vomiting, intermittent bleeding, breast tenderness, mood swings, weight gain or loss of libido.
- In rare cases, severe side effects such as high blood pressure, thrombosis (blood clot formation) and liver function disorders may also occur.
- Women who smoke and/or are over 35 years old should weigh up the risks with their gynaecologist before deciding to take the contraceptive pill.
- If you vomit or have diarrhoea, the pill might not be effective.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

ALSO IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Should you decide to take the pill and there are no medical objections to it, the first pill choice should always be a pill with the active ingredient levonorgestrel to keep the risk of thrombosis low. A woman may develop a thrombosis in the second half of the first year of use. After the first year of use, the risk of thrombosis is low.

Important: Every time you start taking the pill again after a break, all side effects may reappear. A thrombosis is recognised by pain or swelling in the leg or arm, or when walking. In such cases, you should seek medical help immediately. A thrombosis can also lead to a pulmonary embolism or a stroke.

Mini pill

The mini pill is a hormone preparation to be taken regularly, which only contains the hormone progestogen.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the preparation and pack size. A three-month pack costs between 20 € and 45 €.

EFFECT

The mini-pill does not generally prevent ovulation, but causes a mucus plug to form at the cervix. This makes it more difficult for sperm to reach the uterus. At the same time, it affects the build-up of the uterine lining, making it difficult for a fertilised egg to implant. The minipill is taken in a 24-hour rhythm without a break for 28 or 35 days, depending on the preparation. To ensure safe protection you must take the pill on time (see package insert). Irregular and delayed intake, diarrhoea, vomiting or intake of certain medicines, sleeping pills and tranquillisers (including St. John's wort) as well as anti-epileptic drugs will impair the contraceptive effect.

SAFETY

- The mini-pill is one of the relatively safe contraceptive methods.

ADVANTAGES

- The mini-pill generally has fewer side effects than combined pills.
- The flow of the bleeding usually decreases and pain often disappears.

- Due to the small amount of hormones, the mini pill is also suitable for breastfeeding women.
- The contraceptive method can be stopped at any time.

DISADVANTAGES

- Take it at exactly the same time every day. Taking the medicine three hours later already reduces the effectiveness of conception.
- The most common side effects are: cycle disturbances (menstrual periods often become irregular, delayed or stop altogether), breast tenderness, headaches, mood changes or loss of libido.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Vaginal ring

The vaginal ring is a hormonal contraceptive made of flexible plastic. The plastic ring continuously releases the hormones oestrogen and progestin for three weeks. The vaginal ring is inserted into the vagina like a tampon and removed after 21 days. After removal, menstruation-like bleeding occurs for the 7 remaining days. After this break, a new vaginal ring is inserted. The vaginal ring contains the same hormones as the combined pill. Therefore, similar side effects and health risks to the combined pill can occur.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the preparation: single ring approx. 16 to 25 €, in a pack of three approx. 35 to 50 €. Depending on the age, there are additional costs for the prescription fee.

EFFECT

The vaginal ring releases oestrogen and progestogen into the blood through the vaginal skin. The hormones have a threefold effect. They prevent ovulation, thicken the cervical mucus and alter the lining of the womb, preventing it from building up.

SAFETY

When used correctly, the vaginal ring is as safe as the contraceptive pill.

ADVANTAGES

- You don't have to remember to take it every day.
- Especially for women who suffer from gastrointestinal problems, frequent vomiting or diarrhoea, the vaginal ring is a safe contraceptive method.

- The contraceptive method can be stopped at any time.

DISADVANTAGES

- The day of the week and time of day should be carefully observed when inserting and removing the ring.
- Inserting the ring too late makes contraception unsafe.
- The most common side effects are headaches, vaginal inflammation, vaginal discharge. Acne, mood swings, nausea, breast tenderness and pain and painful monthly bleeding or weight gain can also occur.
- The vaginal ring, like all combined hormonal contraceptives containing oestrogen and progestogen, increases the risk of thrombosis, liver dysfunction, etc.
- In a few cases, the ring can be perceived as an unpleasant foreign body and disturbing during sexual intercourse.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Contraceptive patch

The contraceptive patch is a hormonal contraceptive that works through the skin. It should be applied to a clean, dry area of skin (upper arm, bottom, stomach, shoulder blade). The skin around the breasts must be left out. The first patch is applied on the first day of your period. It remains on the skin for seven days and is then replaced with a new one. The patch is changed weekly on the same day of the week. After three weeks of use, there is a seven-day patch-free break, during which the period starts. After that, a new patch is applied even if the bleeding has not yet finished or not started.

COSTS

A monthly pack of three patches costs about 20 €, a three-month pack about 45 €. Depending on the age, there are additional costs for the prescription fee.

EFFECT

By releasing a combination of oestrogen and progestogen, the active substances enter the bloodstream through the skin and monthly ovulation is thus prevented. The hormones also thicken the mucus plug in the cervix, making it impenetrable to sperm.

SAFETY

When used correctly, the contraceptive patch is as safe as the contraceptive pill. However:

- You should check daily that the patch is securely in place.
- The patch-free interval must not exceed seven days.
- If the patch becomes loose for more than 24 hours or falls off, contraception is no longer effective.

ADVANTAGES

- You just have to remember to change the patch every 7 days.
- The patch releases the hormones evenly and constantly, which improves tolerance.
- Diarrhoea or vomiting do not affect the effect.

DISADVANTAGES

- As with all hormonal contraceptives, irregular bleeding can occur.
- The most common side effects are breast tenderness, headaches, skin reactions at the site of adhesion of the patch and nausea.
- Like all combined hormonal contraceptives, the patch increases the risk of blood clots.
- Women with a body weight of 90 kg or more may experience reduced efficacy.
- The patch should not be used during breastfeeding.
- The patch is relatively large and therefore visible to others.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Three-month injection (depot injection)

The three-monthly injection is administered as a depot injection into the buttocks, abdomen, upper arm or gluteal muscle every three months, between the first and fifth day of the menstrual cycle (depending on the preparation). It contains a high dose of progestogen. It should not be used for longer than two years, as prolonged use reduces bone density. The three-month injection is only recommended if other methods of contraception are not an option.

COSTS

The costs for a three-month injection are about 30 to 35 €. In addition, there may be about 15 € for the placement of the injection.

EFFECT

The three-month injection inhibits ovulation by releasing high levels of progestogen, alters the cervical mucus and prevents the lining of the womb from thickening.

SAFETY

Very safe. Ingestion errors are impossible.

ADVANTAGES

- Contraception only needs to be thought of every twelve weeks.

DISADVANTAGES

- The most common side effects are: menstrual irregularities with intermenstrual bleeding and spotting, weight gain, mood swings and depression, sexual aversion. Some women do not have menstrual periods at all.
- Studies suggest that depot injections increase the risk of osteoporosis (reduction in bone density).
- Contraception cannot be discontinued spontaneously. After discontinuation, it can take well over a year before regular ovulation occurs again.
- The three-month injection is not suitable for every woman.
- The three-month injection is only available on prescription and may only be administered by a doctor. Therefore, a regular visit to the gynaecological practice is necessary.
- Breastfeeding mothers may receive the three-month injection no earlier than six weeks after birth.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Hormone implant (hormone sticks)

This is a thin, flexible plastic rod that contains only the hormone progestin. After a thorough examination, the plastic rod is inserted by a doctor in a small operation under local anaesthetic on the inside of the upper arm. The procedure takes place between the first and fifth day of the cycle. The implant is effective for 3 years and must be removed by a doctor at the end of this time.

COSTS.

The costs, including the fee for insertion, are approx. 300 to 350 € or more. For removal, an amount of approx. 50 € must be expected.

EFFECT

The implant continuously releases small amounts of progestogen into the bloodstream, producing an effect similar to that of the mini-pill. It prevents monthly ovulation and may also alter the cervical mucus, making it more difficult for sperm to enter the uterus. At the same time, it affects the build-up of the uterine lining, making it difficult for a fertilised egg to implant.

SAFETY

The hormone implant is one of the safest contraceptive methods. A prerequisite for reliability is the correct insertion of the rod. This should be checked regularly, both by oneself and by a doctor.

ADVANTAGES

- Long-term protection (up to three years).
- The hormone implant can be used by women who cannot tolerate oestrogen-containing contraceptives or are not allowed to take them because of health risks.
- The hormone implant also works safely with diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Can also be used whilst breastfeeding.

DISADVANTAGES

- Menstrual irregularities with irregular, sometimes prolonged bleeding.
- Headaches, weight gain, breast tension, mood swings, dizziness, sexual aversion might occur.
- The intake of certain medicines such as some antiepileptic and psychotropic medicines, medicines against viral diseases and St. John's wort can impair the effectiveness of the implant.
- Skin reactions at the implantation site.
- Insertion and removal must only be carried out by qualified medical staff. In some cases, there are difficulties in removing the rod, which may result in minor or major surgery.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Hormonal coil (IUD)

The T-shaped plastic body constantly releases small amounts of the progestogen levonorgestrel. The usual hormone IUDs remain in the uterus for 3 to 8 years. Hormone IUDs are available in different sizes and in different hormone doses. The IUD is inserted directly into the uterus by the gynaecologist during an examination, preferably during menstruation. Four to twelve weeks after insertion, the first check-up is

performed by ultrasound. This first check-up is usually covered by statutory health insurance. Regular checks of the position of the IUD should be carried out every 6 months in the gynaecological practice.

COSTS

Depending on the model, the cost of materials, consultation, examination and fitting can be up to €400. In addition, the recommended six-monthly check-ups (ultrasound scans) cost around €40.

EFFECT

The progestin causes the mucus to thicken and change, thus preventing the sperm from ascending. Furthermore, the build-up of the uterine lining is suppressed and the implantation of a fertilised egg is prevented.

SAFETY

The hormonal IUD is one of the most reliable methods of contraception.

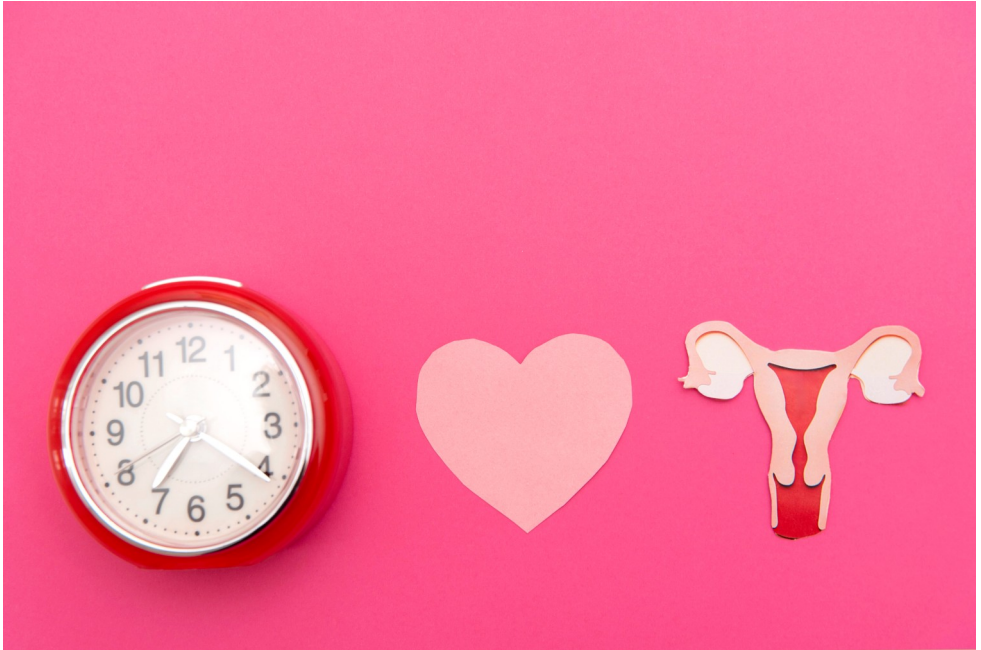
ADVANTAGES

- Long-lasting protection (3–8 years).
- No daily application required.
- The hormonal coil is suitable for women who cannot tolerate oestrogens.
- Heavy and painful menstrual bleeding can be relieved.
- Also safe when suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting.

DISADVANTAGES

- Possible side effects are: spotting and bleeding between periods, especially in the first 3 months. Headaches, nausea, weight gain, breast tenderness, mood swings, sexual aversion.
- The absence of menstrual bleeding or weak menstrual bleeding can be perceived as a burden.
- In the first few weeks after insertion, there is a slightly increased risk of infection in the uterus or fallopian tubes. The risk decreases again after the first few months.
- Regular checks of the position of the IUD should be carried out every six months in the gynaecological practice.
- Inserting the IUD can cause pain.
- Insertion and removal must only be carried out by qualified medical staff.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Contraception without hormones



Copper IUD

The approximately three centimeter T-shaped IUD is inserted into the uterine cavity and is made of plastic. The stem is wrapped with fine copper wire. The IUD is inserted directly into the uterus by the gynecologist during an examination, preferably during menstruation. The copper IUD can remain in the uterus for 3-5 years, depending on the model. Four to twelve weeks after insertion, the first control examination takes place by ultrasound. This first check-up is usually covered by statutory health insurance. Regular checks of the position of the IUD should be carried out in the practice every 6 months. Some copper IUDs are available with gold or silver alloys. These models can remain in the uterus for 7-10 years.

COSTS

Depending on the model, the cost of materials, consultation, examination and fitting are around €200 to €300. In addition, the recommended six-monthly check-ups (ultrasound scans) cost around €40.

EFFECT

The copper IUD continuously releases small amounts of copper. This impairs sperm motility and, at the same time, inhibits the growth of the uterine lining. This makes both fertilisation and the implantation of a fertilised egg more difficult.

SAFETY

The copper IUD is a very safe contraceptive.

ADVANTAGES

- Long-term contraceptive protection without daily use.
- There is no interference with the hormonal balance.
- The natural cycle is maintained.
- The copper IUD is also suitable for breastfeeding women.
- It can also be used as emergency contraception ("IUD after").
- After removal of the IUD, the woman is immediately fertile again.

DISADVANTAGES

- Initially, you may experience spotting or breakthrough bleeding.
- Menstrual bleeding and, in some cases, period pain may become heavier and more painful. If your periods are generally heavy, the copper coil is not a suitable method of contraception.
- Back and abdominal pain can also occur. In such a case, you should always consult your gynaecologist in order to rule out pelvic inflammatory disease.
- If you have a copper intolerance or allergy, the copper IUD cannot be used as a contraceptive method.
- Ectopic pregnancies are not prevented by the IUD.
- In the first few weeks after insertion, the risk of pelvic inflammatory disease is increased. After the first few months, the risk decreases again.
- Regular checks of the position of the IUD should be carried out every six months in the gynaecological practice.
- Inserting the IUD can cause pain.
- Insertion and removal must only be carried out by qualified medical staff.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Copper chain (GyneFix)

The copper chain is a further development of the copper coil. It consists of a plastic thread onto which four or six small copper cylinders are strung. The copper chain is available in two sizes: The small copper chain with four copper cylinders lasts at least three years, the large one with six copper cylinders lasts at least five years. Which size is suitable depends on the size of the uterus. The chain is anchored with a knot about one centimetre deep in the muscles of the uterine wall. This special anchoring technique means that it lies freely in the uterus and adapts individually to the size and shape of the uterus and uterine cavity. The copper chain is usually inserted on the second day of menstruation. During bleeding, the cervix is open wider than usual, allowing better access to the uterus. Regular checks of the position of the copper chain should be carried out by the gynaecologist every six months.

COSTS

The costs including material, consultation, examination and insertion are approx. 300 to 350 €. In addition, the recommended six-monthly check-ups (ultrasound scans) cost around €40.

EFFECT

Copper ions are continuously released and disrupt the build-up of the uterine lining. This prevents the implantation of a fertilised egg. Copper also has a sperm-inhibiting effect.

SAFETY

The copper chain is a very safe contraceptive.

ADVANTAGES

- Long-term contraceptive protection without daily use.
- There is no intervention in the hormonal balance.
- The natural cycle remains intact.

DISADVANTAGES

- Possible side effects are spotting in the first few days after insertion.
- Menstrual bleeding and, in some cases, period pain may become heavier and more painful.
- In the first few weeks after insertion, the risk of pelvic inflammatory disease is increased. After the first few months, the risk decreases again.
- If you have a copper intolerance or allergy, the copper chain cannot be used as a contraceptive method.

- Not all gynaecologists in Germany can insert the copper chain. The correct anchoring technique requires experience and is only carried out by gynaecologists who have been trained in it.
- In the first few months, the copper chain is expelled more frequently than the copper coil.
- Regular checks of the position of the copper chain should be carried out every six months in the gynaecological practice.
- Insertion and removal must only be carried out by qualified medical staff.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Copper bead ball IUB SCu300 B MIDI

According to the available sources, the current market availability of the copper bead ball in Germany and the EU is not clearly established. Whilst some specialist and practice websites continue to list the product, other sources report that the authorities have imposed a ban on its sale or use. The contraceptive ball is an intrauterine device containing copper and is supposed to be similar to the copper IUD in the way it works. The copper ball consists of a wire on which 17 small copper beads are threaded. A resetting mechanism causes the chain to form a ball after it has been inserted. The ball is available in three different sizes (12, 15 and 18 mm) to ensure that it lies perfectly in the uterus. The copper ball lies freely movable in the uterus, without ends and edges. This is to reduce piercing of the uterine wall, incorrect placement or slipping of the copper ball, as well as pain and cramps during use.

COSTS

The costs for material, preliminary examination, insertion and follow-up check vary. The costs are between €300 and €500. In addition, the recommended six-monthly check-ups (ultrasound scans) cost around €40.

EFFECT

Copper ions are continuously released and disrupt the build-up of the uterine lining. This prevents the implantation of a fertilised egg. Copper also has a sperm-inhibiting effect.

SAFETY

Due to the relative novelty of the product, it is not possible to give a final assessment of the safety of the copper ball in comparison to other copper -containing spirals.

ADVANTAGES

- Long-term contraceptive protection without daily use.
- There is no intervention in the hormone balance.

DISADVANTAGES

- To date, there is no reliable information regarding contraceptive effectiveness, potential side effects and risks.
- The risk of the device slipping out of place or being expelled is significantly higher than with alternative forms of contraception.

Barrier methods - mechanical methods



Mechanical contraceptive methods, also called barrier methods, provide a barrier so that sperm cannot reach the egg. Barrier methods are only safe if they are used correctly and during every sexual intercourse. While the condom catches the sperm, barrier methods block access to the uterus for the woman. The barrier is placed in front of the cervix.

Condom

The condom is a thin rubber protection that is pulled over the erected penis before sexual intercourse. The condom is available in a wide range of variations: large, small, wafer-thin or slightly thicker, moist, dry, with and without spermicides, flavours, colours and fragrances.

It prevents pregnancies and offers protection against sexually transmitted infections. A new condom must be used for each sexual intercourse. Condoms are readily available in pharmacies, drugstores, or through online shops. The application requires some practice.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the preparation and pack size. Ten condoms cost approx. 5 to 7 €.

EFFECT

The ejaculate (semen) is safely collected in the condom. Sperm cannot reach the uterus or the egg.

SAFETY

Safe, if used correctly and if a new condom is used during every sexual intercourse. Contraceptive safety depends not only on correct use but also on the quality of the condom. The CE mark and the expiry date should be observed! In practice, mistakes in handling repeatedly lead to unwanted pregnancies.

ADVANTAGES

- Protects against sexually transmitted infections.
- The only contraceptive method, apart from sterilisation, for men.
- Available in nearly all pharmacies, drugstores and supermarkets.

DISADVANTAGES

- Condoms cannot prevent pregnancy if used incorrectly.
- The size of the condom must be right.
- The condom can tear or slip off.
- Some men, but also women, find the condom bothersome.
- There are also cases of latex allergies, in which case condoms cannot be used unless they are latex-free.

Female condom

Similar to the male condom, the female condom is a flexible bag made of latex or plastic (polyurethane) with one open and one closed side. The female condom is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse and lines the vagina like a second skin. It is similar in length to a condom, but much wider. There is a soft ring at each end. The closed end is placed in front of the cervix. The open end is on the outside over the vulva lips. A new female condom must be used every time you have sexual intercourse. Female condoms are often used together with lubricants.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the product. A female condom costs around €4, a pack of three is slightly cheaper at around €10.

EFFECT

The seminal fluid is collected in the female condom.

SAFETY

When used correctly, female condoms are probably as safe as a normal condom. To date, however, there is no clear study on the safety of this contraceptive method. This is mainly due to the fact that female condoms are not yet widely used.

ADVANTAGES

- The only method by which a woman can protect herself against sexually transmitted infections.

DISADVANTAGES

- The application requires practice and some women and men find the handling disruptive.
- Since the female condom only comes in one size, it can slip during sexual intercourse.
- Female condoms are more expensive than male condoms. They usually have to be ordered from online suppliers or are available in pharmacies.

Diaphragm

A diaphragm is a cup-shaped cap made of latex or silicone with an integrated metal spring. Before sexual intercourse and in combination with a contraceptive gel or cream, the diaphragm is inserted into the vagina and acts as a barrier in front of the cervix. The diaphragm should not be removed sooner than six or eight hours (depending on the model) after sexual intercourse.

The diaphragm is suitable for women who are looking for a hormone-free contraceptive alternative. In Germany, differently sized models are available. It is important that the diaphragm is the right size and fits well. The fit or size must be checked or adjusted by a gynaecologist. If you gain or lose more than five kilos, the right fit should be checked.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the preparation and lie between 40 to 70 €. In addition, there are possible costs for shipping, testing/adjustment and control examinations. In addition, there are the costs for the contraceptive gel (approx. 10 €).

EFFECT

Closing the cervix prevents sperm from entering the uterus.

SAFETY

When used correctly (including the use of a contraceptive gel) and checked/adjusted, the diaphragm is a reliable method of contraception.

ADVANTAGES

- Can be used for up to two years.
- Use only when needed. Can be inserted a few hours before sexual intercourse.
- The hormone balance remains unaffected and there are no known health side effects or long-term consequences.

DISADVANTAGES

- The application requires some practice.
- Only use in combination with a contraceptive gel or cream to achieve reliable protection against unwanted pregnancy.
- Some women have more frequent bladder infections.
- A diaphragm should not be used for the first six weeks after childbirth.
- Contraceptive gel/cream can irritate the skin of the vagina or penis or cause an allergy.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Contraceptive cap

The silicone contraceptive cap looks like a miniature bell or thimble. Like the diaphragm, the contraceptive cap is inserted into the vagina and placed directly over the cervix. The contraceptive cap must be used with a contraceptive gel. The cap must be inserted a few minutes before sexual intercourse. It is important that the contraceptive cap is carefully fitted by a professional.

COSTS

The contraceptive cap costs between €50 and €60. In addition, there are possible costs for shipping, fitting and check-ups. In addition, there are the costs for the contraceptive gel (approx. 10 €).

EFFECT

Sucks onto the cervix when inserted into the vagina and seals it against sperm.

SAFETY

The safety of the contraceptive cap depends on whether it is fitted and used correctly. If the cap is the right size, fits perfectly and is used correctly every time you have sex, the risk of it slipping is low.

ADVANTAGES

- Can be used for one to several years.
- Use only when needed. It can be administered up to two hours before sexual intercourse.
- The hormone balance remains unaffected.
- No known health side effects or long-term effects.

DISADVANTAGES

- The application requires practice.
- May only be used in combination with a contraceptive gel.
- The contraceptive cap should not be removed earlier than eight hours after sexual intercourse.
- The contraceptive cap may slip.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Natural methods

Natural methods of contraception are about acquiring the knowledge of fertile and infertile days. Among the best-known methods are the temperature method, Billings method (also called the mucus method), symptothermal method (a combination of temperature and mucus method), examination of the cervix or Knaus-Ogino method.

The temperature method, Billings method and the symptothermal method can be supported by contraceptive computers to determine fertile days. There are also programs and online offers that allow recording and automatic evaluation of the measured values on computers. During the fertile days, barrier methods (condom, diaphragm, etc.) must be used to protect against unwanted pregnancy.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the method from about 0 to 15 € (e.g. for a thermometer). Aids such as test sticks for determining the fertile days (ovulation test) cost approx. 25 € (for 7 test sticks). Temperature computers cost about 90 to 500 €. Hormone computers cost approx. 90 €, there are additional monthly costs for test sticks.

SAFETY

Natural contraceptive methods are rather unsafe methods.

ADVANTAGES

- There are no health related side effects.
- There is no intervention in the body.
- Knowledge of one's own body is increased.

DISADVANTAGES

- It is necessary to observe the body regularly and closely and to make records about it.
- Not suitable for women with irregular menstrual cycle, irregular daily routine, directly after pregnancy or during breastfeeding.
- Natural contraceptive methods alone do not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Chemical contraceptive methods

Chemical contraceptive methods are available as suppositories, gels, creams, tablets or sponges. The respective product must be inserted deep into the vagina up to the cervix before sexual intercourse.

COSTS

Depending on the product, the cost is between €7 to €12.

EFFECT

Chemical contraceptive methods contain substances that kill sperm cells or make them immobile.

SAFETY

On their own, chemical contraceptive methods are unsafe. They become slightly safer when women use them in combination with a mechanical barrier such as a diaphragm or contraceptive cap.

ADVANTAGES

- Hormone-free
- Easy to use
- Use only when necessary

DISADVANTAGES

- Unsafe
- Can irritate the vaginal mucosa or penile skin.
- In combination with a condom, only suitable chemical contraceptives may be used, as some agents can damage the condom.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Male sterilisation

Sterilisation is a possible form of contraception if children are not (no longer) desired. It is a surgical procedure that is difficult to reverse. During the outpatient operation with local anaesthesia, both vas deferens are cut or closed. There is no effect on potency or sexual sensation. After the operation, the man is not immediately sterile, as there is still semen in the vas deferens. Only after multiple semen analyses and medical confirmation can additional contraception be discontinued. Before a decision is made, a detailed consultation with a doctor will take place to discuss the nature of the procedure and the potential risks.

COSTS

The costs amount to approx. 400 to 750 €.

SAFETY

Very safe contraceptive method.

ADVANTAGES

- Permanent contraception with no further effort required.
- Apart from the condom, the only contraceptive method for men.
- Has no effect on hormone balance, sexual potency or sexual sensation.

DISADVANTAGES

- Temporary wound pain may occur.
- The contraceptive effect only appears after a few weeks or months.
- The procedure is difficult to reverse and represents a permanent decision against having (any more) children.
- The decision can be emotionally draining and should be carefully considered.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Female sterilisation

Sterilisation is a possible form of contraception if children are not (no longer) desired. This is a surgical procedure that is difficult to reverse. The operation is usually performed in the first half of the menstrual cycle under general anaesthetic and can be carried out on an outpatient or inpatient basis. Depending on the method used, the fallopian tubes are either cauterised over a length of 2 to 3 cm, clamped off with a small clip (clip method), or removed. Before a decision is made, a detailed consultation with a doctor takes place to discuss the nature of the procedure and the possible risks.

COSTS

The costs amount to approx. 600 to 1000 €, depending on the method. The decision not to become pregnant can be very important for medical or psychological reasons. If other reliable methods of contraception are not an option in such cases, there is a possibility that the statutory health insurance provider will cover the costs upon application. Women with private health insurance can contact their insurance provider directly to find out which services are covered.

SAFETY

Very safe contraceptive method.

ADVANTAGES

- Permanent contraception with no further effort required.
- No effect on the natural cycle.

No effect on hormone production in the ovaries or sexual sensation.

DISADVANTAGES

- General surgical risks
- Wound pain
- The procedure is difficult to reverse and represents a permanent decision against having (any more) children.
- The decision can be emotionally draining and should be carefully considered.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Emergency methods

Morning after pill

The morning-after pill is an emergency contraceptive that can prevent an unwanted pregnancy in the event of a contraceptive mishap or unprotected sexual intercourse. There are two preparations with different active ingredients.

The morning-after pill with the active ingredient levonorgestrel (LNG) can be taken up to a maximum of 72 hours (three days), and the morning-after pill with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate (UPA) up to a maximum of 120 hours (five days) after unprotected sexual intercourse. There is a risk of pregnancy shortly before ovulation. The morning-after pill is most effective if taken as soon as possible after a contraceptive mishap or unprotected sex, preferably within 12 hours. The morning-after pill is a small pill that is taken once with a sip of water. If taken in time, i.e. as soon as possible, the morning-after pill is highly reliable in preventing an unwanted pregnancy. The morning-after pill is available without a prescription at any pharmacy.

If the morning-after pill is not an option for medical reasons, the insertion of a copper IUD or a copper chain can be considered as an alternative. When breastfeeding, it is important to take the right preparation: The morning-after pill with the active ingredient levonorgestrel (LNG) should be taken immediately after breastfeeding. Afterwards, a breastfeeding break of eight hours is necessary. After taking the morning-after pill with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate (ellaOne®), a breastfeeding break of one week is recommended. However, the breast milk should be pumped for further milk production. Said milk must be disposed of.

COSTS

The costs vary depending on the preparation. With the active ingredient levonorgestrel, the morning-after pill costs about 20€, with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate about 40 €. If you are under the age of 22 and have a doctor prescribe the morning-after pill and then take this prescription to the pharmacy, the costs will be reimbursed by your health insurance fund. From the age of 22, you will have to cover the costs yourself. If there is evidence of a criminal offence against sexual autonomy, the health insurance fund will cover the costs regardless of age. Those with private health insurance should contact their health insurance provider directly to find out whether they will cover the costs.

EFFECT

The morning-after pill prevents or delays ovulation if it has not yet occurred.

SAFETY

The morning-after pill is most effective the sooner it is taken after a contraceptive mishap or unprotected sexual intercourse, preferably within 12 hours. It cannot offer 100% protection against an unwanted pregnancy.

ADVANTAGES

- Possibility for emergencies.

DISADVANTAGES

- Possible side effects are nausea, headache, breast soreness, dizziness and abdominal pain.
- The morning-after pill is only to be used in an emergency and only works for this specific contraceptive mishap, i.e. pregnancy may well occur in the further cycle despite the morning-after pill.
- A safe contraceptive method, e.g. condoms, must be used until the next menstrual period.
- Certain medicines can reduce the effectiveness of this treatment, including some medicines for epilepsy, HIV, tuberculosis and fungal infections, as well as preparations containing St John's wort. It is therefore important to seek advice from your pharmacist. The pharmacy should be informed about this before purchasing the morning-after pill.
- Women who take these medicines should generally see their gynaecologist quickly after taking the morning-after pill.
- A higher body weight (body mass index) can possibly reduce the effectiveness of the morning-after pill.

Spiral After

The IUD can be inserted into the uterus by a gynaecologist up to five days after unprotected sexual intercourse. If you decide to use the IUD for emergency contraception, you will have long-term contraceptive protection afterwards. The IUD cannot be inserted for a few days and then be removed again soon after. Therefore, you should consider this option of emergency contraception carefully.

Depending on the model, the IUD can remain in the uterus for three to five years. The morning-after coil is safer than the morning-after pill, as it prevents the implantation of a fertilised cell after ovulation. This emergency solution ensures long-term contraception. A thorough examination and consultation with a gynaecologist should have taken place before insertion.

COSTS

The costs, including consultation, examination and insertion, are about 200 to 300 €, depending on the model. In addition, the recommended six-monthly check-ups (ultrasound scans) cost around €40.

EFFECT

The effect is the same as that of a copper IUD. Small amounts of copper are steadily released and disrupt the build-up of the uterine lining. This prevents the implantation of a fertilised egg. Copper also has a sperm-inhibiting effect.

ADVANTAGES

- Possibility for emergencies.
- A combination of emergency contraception and long-term contraception.

DISADVANTAGES

- Insertion is more difficult in this emergency situation since it does not occur during menstruation.
- Possible side effects and risks are similar to those of a copper IUD, e.g. heavier or more painful periods (for further details, see 'Copper IUD'). Individual medical advice is therefore particularly important.

Copper chain as emergency contraception

The copper chain can be inserted by a gynaecologist up to five days after unprotected sexual intercourse. If you choose the copper chain as emergency contraception, you will have long-term contraceptive protection (three to five years) afterwards. The copper chain cannot be inserted for a few days and then be removed again soon after. Therefore, you should think carefully about whether you want this long-term contraception. The copper chain afterwards is safer than the morning-after pill, as it prevents the implantation of a fertilised cell after ovulation. A thorough examination and consultation with a gynaecologist should have taken place.

COSTS

The costs, including consultation, examination and insertion, are approx. 300 to 350 €. In addition, the recommended six-monthly check-ups (ultrasound scans) cost around €40.

EFFECT

The effect corresponds to that of a copper chain. Copper ions are continuously released and disrupt the build-up of the uterine lining. This prevents the implantation of a fertilised egg. Copper also has a sperm-inhibiting effect.

ADVANTAGES

- Possibility for emergencies.
- A combination of emergency contraception and long-term contraception.

DISADVANTAGES

- Insertion is more difficult in this emergency situation since it does not occur during menstruation.
- Possible side effects and risks are similar to those of a copper chain, e.g. heavier or more painful periods (for further details, see 'Copper Chain'). Individual medical advice is therefore particularly important.
- One hurdle is the difficulty of quickly finding a gynaecologist who uses the copper chain as emergency contraception. Not all gynaecologists in Germany offer the insertion of the copper chain.

How to find us

COUNSELLING CENTRES IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA

Do you have questions about contraception, pregnancy and birth? Here, you can find our counselling centres in North Rhine-Westphalia.



INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUALITY AND YOUR RIGHTS

On our "Sex and Law" page, you'll find a wealth of information about: Who is allowed to do what, when, and with whom...; Everything you need to know about visiting the gynecologist; emergency contraception - the morning-after pill; pregnancy; circumcision; sexting, and much more. The information is available in German, English, French, Arabic, or easy-to-understand language.



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