

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH:

Your **Priorities;** Your **Timing**



MISSOURI
FAMILY
HEALTH
COUNCIL



Birth Control Methods



For people who can become pregnant:

- ▶ Birth control can be a great tool for making sure you're in control of if, when, and under what circumstances you become pregnant. Birth control should fit your lifestyle, body, and priorities. For some people, having a birth control method that's most effective at preventing pregnancy is most important. For others, having options that are convenient for them, that help with other symptoms like period cramps and acne, or that other people wouldn't know they're using is the most important factor. Check out our guide below to find the best fit for your needs.



For people who can cause a pregnancy for someone else:

- ▶ Using condoms correctly, every time you have sex, is a great way to prevent causing a pregnancy for someone else.
- ▶ Talking to your sexual partners about their birth control and sexually transmitted infection (STI) protection plans and goals is an important part of talking about consent (*the process of giving & receiving permission for something to happen*).

Your Birth Control Needs Are As Unique As You Are



People use birth control for lots of different reasons, and there are a lot of different types. They are safe, effective, and don't impact your ability to get pregnant later on.

- ▶ People might consider some of the following when they're deciding what method works best for their bodies:
 - Effectiveness at preventing pregnancy.
 - How long it lasts.
 - How you use the method (*for example, the ring goes in the vagina, the IUD goes in the uterus, the implant goes in the arm, the pill is taken by mouth, etc.*).
 - How quickly your fertility returns after you stop taking it.
 - What side effects it might have.
 - What non-contraceptive benefits it might have.
 - Whether or not it uses hormones.
 - Whether or not you have to have a procedure.
 - Whether or not you have to interact with a provider regularly.
 - Whether or not other people would know you're using it.
 - Whether or not it protects against STIs.
 - Whether or not it affects your period.
 - Whatever is important to you!

- ▶ Some birth control methods have side effects and others interact with some medical conditions. Ask your healthcare provider to talk more about this.
- ▶ No birth control is 100% effective at preventing pregnancy. When birth control fails, emergency contraception can be a great back-up option.
- ▶ Most birth control will not keep you from getting an STI. Condoms are the only option that protect against both pregnancy and STIs. Condoms can be used in addition to your chosen method for added prevention.
- ▶ To find a provider who can talk with you about birth control, visit our website at **[MFHC.org/patients](https://www.mfhc.org/patients)**.



Find the method that works for you.

There is no such thing as the “right” or “best” form of birth control. The best one for you is the one you decide is the right fit. This chart shows some of the available options. Talk to a provider to learn more about other methods if none of these seem like a good fit for you.

		Effectiveness	Side effects	STI prevention	Hormone-free	Easy to hide	Health benefits	Reduces periods
	NON-HORMONAL IUD*							
	HORMONAL IUD*							
	IMPLANT							
	THE SHOT							
	THE RING							
	THE PATCH							
	THE PILL							
	DIAPHRAGM							
	EXTERNAL CONDOM							
	INTERNAL CONDOM							
	LEVONORGESTEREL-BASED PILLS FOR EC (Plan B)*							
	ULIPRISTAL ACETATE PILLS FOR EC (Ella)*							

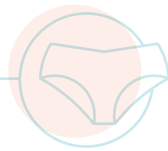
 GREAT
  PRETTY GOOD
  DECENT
  NOT AT ALL

*Can be used as emergency contraception.

Sexually Transmitted Infections: What You Need to Know



Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are passed from one person to another through oral, anal, or vaginal sex. STIs are common. Some of them are completely curable. Others last forever, but have very effective treatments. Most people who have an STI don't have any symptoms, so it's important to get tested on a regular basis, especially a few weeks after having sex with a new partner.



Here are some tips for reducing the risk of getting an STI:

- ▶ Use a new condom correctly every time you have oral, anal, or vaginal sex.
- ▶ Use oral dams or Lorals as a barrier between the mouth of one partner and the body of another partner during oral sex or rimming.

- ▶ Do a quick visual check of yourself and your partners. Someone might have an STI that can be passed from one person to another if they have a sore, scab, rash, or discharge on their genitals.
- ▶ Talk to your partners about when they were last tested for STIs and what the results were. Share your status, too.
- ▶ There is a vaccine to prevent HPV (*human papillomavirus*), a sexually transmitted infection that can lead to several types of cancer. Talk to your provider about getting vaccinated if you haven't already!
- ▶ PrEP (*pre-exposure prophylaxis*) is a daily pill that can help prevent HIV.
- ▶ PEP (*post-exposure prophylaxis*) can help reduce your risk of contracting HIV if taken within 72 hours of having sexual or blood contact with someone who has, or might have, HIV.



STIs: The Details

Some sexually transmitted infections are caused by bacteria. These are easily cured. Examples include chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. Others, like herpes, hepatitis, and HIV are viral — these tend to stay with someone forever, but have very effective treatments. People with these STIs can still have excellent quality of life. Finally, some STIs, like public lice (*crabs*), scabies, and trichomoniasis are caused by other types of microscopic organisms. Even though most people who have an STI don't have any symptoms, sometimes people with vaginas experience abnormal vaginal discharge, pain with peeing or sex, lower back/abdominal pain, itching, fever, nausea, or bleeding/spotting between periods. People with penises sometimes experience discharge, burning/pain with peeing, itching, and swelling of the testicles.



How to Get Tested:

- ▶ You can find a clinic at **MFHC.org**.
- ▶ To be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea, you can pee in a cup or use a genital swab (*completed by you or a provider*).
- ▶ To be tested for HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis, you can have a blood draw or finger stick (*by a provider at a clinic*).
- ▶ To be diagnosed with trichomoniasis, scabies, or pubic lice, providers will often do a physical exam to check for infection.

If left untreated, STIs can cause permanent damage to your body. It's important to begin treatment as soon as possible to avoid this. One possible outcome is Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (*PID*), a painful condition that can cause permanent damage to your reproductive organs and make becoming pregnant impossible. Getting tested regularly and seeing a provider if you're having any symptoms at all is a great way to keep yourself and your partners as healthy as possible.



Safe, Healthy, Respectful Relationships & Consent

Relationships can take many forms, but it's important that they contain trust, accountability, safety, honesty, communication, support, and cooperation. That means that you're able to make decisions together that focus on what is best for everyone involved. Everyone is valued for who they are, and their boundaries and limits are heard and respected. To learn more about what healthy relationships look like, visit loveisrespect.org.

Consent is the freely-given, specific, informed, clear-minded "yes" to any kind of physical or sexual interaction. Consent can be revoked at any time, and can only be given when someone isn't pressuring someone else into saying "yes." Giving and receiving consent is a crucial part of any sexual experience.

In the state of Missouri, people can freely give consent with other people starting at age 17. However, minors between 14-17 can give consent to partners who are less than 4 years older than them. For example, a 14 year old can consent to sex with a 17 year old, but not an 18 year old. A 15 year old can consent to sex with an 18 year old, but not a 19 year old. Anyone 13 years old or younger cannot legally consent to sex in the state of Missouri.



Personal Hygiene



It's important to keep your body clean and healthy. One way to do that is through regular, routine personal hygiene.

- ▶ For people with penises, it's important to clean your genitals with just gentle soap, water, and your hands, carefully cleaning underneath the foreskin, too. Avoid use of a washcloth or loofah as this can scratch the skin. A thick, whitish discharge under the foreskin is normal and protective. If you notice any changes, or if your penis becomes painful, red, itchy or has discharge, talk to your provider.
- ▶ For people with vulvas, it's important to gently clean the outside of your genitals with water and your hands. If you want to use soap, make sure there are no dyes, scents, fragrances, or exfoliants in the soap. Avoid the use of a washcloth or a loofah as this can scratch the skin.

- The inside of the vagina cleans itself. Using products like feminine hygiene washes or douches can disrupt the natural pH balance of the vagina and lead to infection. It's normal to have some vaginal discharge that may change depending on where you are in your menstrual cycle. If you notice any changes, or if your discharge has an unusual color or smell, talk to your provider.
- After you've gone to the bathroom, always wipe from front (*vagina*) to back (*anus*) in order to reduce the spread of bacteria that can cause infection.
- Avoiding wet or tight clothes (*like swimsuits, gym clothes, or leggings*) for long periods of time can help keep your vagina healthy and infection-free.
- Using period products (*like pads, tampons, menstrual cups, period underwear, etc.*) can be a more comfortable way to manage bleeding during menstruation. These should be changed regularly (*i.e. every few hours*) to ensure maximum effectiveness and comfort.



Mission

A private nonprofit organization, Missouri Family Health Council, Inc. (MFHC) champions access for every individual to culturally sensitive, quality, sexual and reproductive health education and services.



Vision

Our vision is to expand, ensure, and empower reproductive and sexual healthcare for all. We're proud to lead The Right Time initiative and the federal Title X family planning program in Missouri.



Missouri Family
Health Council, Inc.

MFHC.org | (573) 636-4060 | info@mfhc.org

Clinic finder: **MFHC.org/patients**

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