

Birth Control Q&A

What fits into the category of birth control?

When people hear the term birth control, they often think of birth control pills, but that is just one type of available contraception. Technically, birth control means anything from natural planning to over-the-counter products to a prescription device such as an IUD.

There are different success rates and risk factors for each kind of birth control, so it's critical to talk to one of our specialists before making a choice. The doctor assesses not just the patient's medical status but lifestyle and preferences before making a recommendation.

What are birth control pills?

Birth control pills are certainly one of the most common forms of contraceptives. There are various types available. Conventional ones contain either estrogen and progestin or progestin only.

Even within each grouping, there are different options available. For the combination pill, patients can take either a monophasic or multiphasic pill, for example. The goal is to either suppress ovulation or thicken the uterine wall so that it's not optimal for egg implantation. Some pills do both of these things.

The vaginal ring NuvaRing works a lot like birth control pills but without having to deal with it daily. The ring sits in the vagina for three weeks to release estrogen and progestin and then comes out for one week during the patient's period.

What are long-lasting reversible birth control methods?

Like the pill, there are several long-lasting yet reversible ways to prevent conception. These are good for women who have trouble taking the pill or who just don't want to bother with it. They are for the patient who wants to get pregnant but not anytime soon, too.

There are three basic types:

- Intrauterine device

- Contraceptive implant
- Contraceptive injections

The intrauterine device, or IUD, is referred to as the "fit and forget" method. One of the many skilled practitioners at Capital Women's Care D.C. fits either a copper IUD or a hormonal one into the patient, and it stays there for five years or more.

Nexplanon is an implant that is also a fit-and-forget device. It's injected just under the skin and releases progestogen into the body for up to three years.

Injections such as Depo-Provera work for just 12 weeks, so they are easier than the pill but less long-lasting than the other methods.