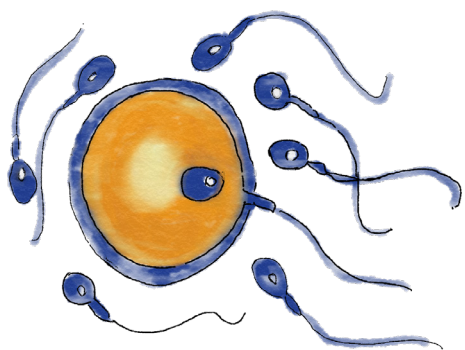


# Methods of contraception

Methods of contraception are ways of avoiding getting pregnant. To get pregnant, the woman's egg must come into contact with the man's sperm.



Pregnancy can be avoided by using:

1. **Barrier methods:** a physical barrier is used to prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. This basically refers to male and female condoms (99% effective).
2. **Hormone-based methods:** ovulation is prevented by administering certain doses of hormones (90-95% effective).

Both methods can be used together at the same time.

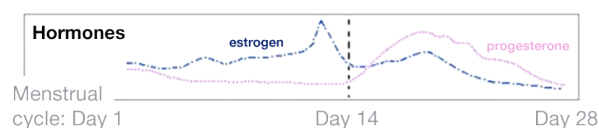
The effectiveness of any one particular method depends mainly on their correct use.

**Barrier methods not only prevent unwanted pregnancies. They also protect you from catching sexually transmitted diseases** (including syphilis, HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea or chlamydia) and infection by human papillomavirus, and consequently they reduce the risk of getting cervical cancer.

## How do hormone-based methods affect the menstrual cycle?

A woman's menstrual cycle is fundamentally controlled by two types of hormones: Estrogens and progestogens.

An increase in estrogens prepares the uterus for a possible pregnancy and for ovulation. An increase in progestogens stops ovulation, and the uterus waits in the hope of getting pregnant. If the woman does not get pregnant, her hormone levels drop and cause the inner lining of her uterus to bleed. This is known as *menstruation*.



Hormone-based methods provide the same hormones that our bodies produce, but they are administered externally, in a set dose. This is a way of stopping or stalling ovulation. These methods are used to prevent pregnancy and also to regulate the hormonal cycle in women with irregular, painful, very heavy or frequent periods. They can also be used to treat certain disorders caused by hormone changes, like acne or polycystic ovary syndrome.

## What can't they be used for?

They do not prevent pregnancy if you start to take them after having unprotected sex. To be effective, they must be taken before having sex. If you have had unprotected sex, you should take the pills known as "morning-after pills". They also contain hormones, but in different doses.

## What type of hormone-based methods are there?

1. Combined (with both estrogen and progestogen): contraceptive pills, patches and vaginal rings.
2. Progestogen-only: progestogen-only pills, subcutaneous implants, contraceptive injections and intrauterine devices (IUD).