IS CONTRACEPTION NECESSARY?

Yes, if you want to be sexually active without having children, it is. By using contraception, you can avoid pregnancy until you want to become pregnant. If you do not use contraception, there is a very large chance that you will become pregnant.

Which method should you choose?
All contraceptive methods have pros and cons. Most methods are very effective, but only if they are used correctly and every time. You can learn about the different methods by reading this pamphlet. Talk to your partner about contraception, and ask your doctor if you have any questions.

If you feel that the method you are using does not suit your needs or that it has too many downsides, choose a different method. Be sure to start using the new method as soon as you stop using the old one.

Contraception methods

A **condom** is a long sheath made out of very thin rubber. Condoms come in different shapes, sizes, and colours.

**Birth control pills** are tablets that contain two hormones (oestrogen and progestogen). Birth control pills are usually taken over a period of 21 days, followed by a 7-day break. Following this break, the next cycle of pills is taken over a period of 21 days, followed by a 7-day break, and so on.

**Minipills** are tablets that only contain one hormone (progestogen). The minipill must be taken every day at exactly the same time.

A **vaginal ring** consists of a soft, pliable plastic ring (5.4 cm in diameter), which contains the same hormones as birth control pills. The ring is inserted within the vagina and remains there for 21 days, after which it is removed and thrown away. After a 7-day break, a new ring is put into place, where it remains for 21 days, and so on.

The **contraceptive patch** is a thin, beige patch that can be placed on 4 different areas of the body (see below) and contains the same hormones as those in birth control pills. The patch has to remain on the skin for a week at a time, after which it is
Contraception is necessary if you want to be sexually active without having children.

The contraceptive implant is a thin rod, 4 cm in length and with a diameter of 2 mm, about the same size as a match. The implant is inserted just under the skin on the underside of the upper arm. The implant works for a long period and contains only one hormone (progestogen).

The intrauterine device (IUD) or coil is a small plastic device that is inserted in the uterus. The IUD can be found in different forms. The copper IUD is wound with copper wire. The hormonal IUD consists of a plastic container that releases a hormone (progestogen) into the uterus.

A diaphragm is a rubber dome with a soft, flexible ring in its rim. The diaphragm should always be used with spermicidal cream. Diaphragms come in different sizes. The doctor can measure you for a diaphragm in connection with a routine examination, so that it will fit you exactly. You should have measurements taken for a new diaphragm after birth, an abortion, or a gynaecological operation.

The female condom is a rubber sheath treated with cream, with a ring at each end (an inner and an outer ring). The inner ring helps in placing the female condom properly in the vagina. The outer ring, which is the open end of the sheath, remains outside the vagina. The female condom is specially designed to fit all women – regardless of the size of their vagina.

The contraceptive injection is an injection with a hormone (progestogen), which is injected about every 3rd month. A doctor performs the injection.

Natural family planning (fertility awareness method) means that the woman uses her body’s natural rhythm as a form of contraception. This means determining the time of ovulation by measuring temperature, secretions – or a urine test.

Sterilisation is a permanent method of contraception. For women, sterilisation is achieved by an operation through the abdominal wall, usually in the form of a laparoscopic operation. It can also be completed through an incision just above the pubic hairline. For men, the operation is performed through the skin of the scrotum.
HOW THE METHODS WORK

The condom blocks the sperm cells, so that they cannot enter the uterus. The condom is rolled onto the erect penis before each intercourse. After intercourse, you must hold the condom as the penis is withdrawn. The condom can only be used once. To ensure proper use, be sure to practice putting a condom on a few times, before you start using it as a method. All men and boys can use condoms. If you use the condom correctly in connection with each intercourse, you have a **97%** chance of avoiding pregnancy.

Birth control pills prevent ovulation and affect the lining of the uterus, so that it is unsuitable for pregnancy. The mucous in the cervix is also affected, so that sperm cells cannot enter. Birth control pills are best suited for women under the age of 35. Women over the age of 35, who do not smoke, can use low-dose pills. Ask your doctor if the method is suitable for you. When you take birth control pills consistently, your chance of avoiding pregnancy is almost **100%**.

One type of minipill affects the mucous in the cervix in such a way that sperm cells cannot enter the uterus and fertilise the egg. Many women also experience that the lining of their uterus is affected – in the same way as with birth control pills. Another type of minipill prevents ovulation. Minipills are particularly effective for women between the ages of 30 and 45. Ask your doctor if the method is appropriate for you. When you take minipills at the same time each day, your chances of avoiding pregnancy are about **98%**. Minipills are also to be found in a high-dose version, which is almost the same as birth control pills, in the sense that they prevent ovulation. Just as in the case of birth control pills – you have to take these minipills every day, and if you remember to take all the pills, the method is almost **100%** effective.

The vaginal ring prevents ovulation and affects the lining of the uterus, so it is unsuitable for pregnancy. The mucous in the cervix is also affected, so that sperm cells cannot enter. Ask your doctor if the method is suitable for you. If you use the vaginal ring correctly, your chance of avoiding pregnancy is almost **100%**.

You can get free information about contraception from your doctor or at a contraception clinic.
The contraceptive patch prevents ovulation and affects the lining of the uterus, so that it is unsuitable for pregnancy. The mucous in the cervix is also affected, preventing sperm cells from entering. The patch can be placed four different places on the body: on the buttocks, on the stomach, on the upper body (not the breasts), and on the upper arms. This method is best for women under the age of 35 years and who weigh less than 90 kg. Ask your doctor if the method is right for you. If you use the patch correctly, you have an almost 100% chance of avoiding pregnancy.

The contraceptive implant slowly releases a small amount of hormone (progestogen), which prevents ovulation. The hormone also affects the mucous in the cervix, so sperm cells cannot enter the uterus. The method works for three years at a time, and is very effective. Ask your doctor if the method is suitable for you. If you get an implant, you will have an almost 100% chance of avoiding pregnancy.

The intrauterine device (IUD) or coil is found in two forms: the copper IUD and the hormonal IUD.

The copper IUD affects the area around the cervix, which reduces the ability of sperm cells to move. The IUD also affects the lining of the uterus, so that fertilised eggs, if any, cannot implant. The device can remain in place for 5-8 years. When you use the copper IUD, your chance of avoiding pregnancy is about 98%.

The hormonal IUD slowly releases a hormone (progestogen), which affects the mucous in the cervix, among other things. The hormonal IUD is appropriate for women who have heavy menstrual bleeding and menstrual cramps. When you use a hormonal IUD, your chance of avoiding pregnancy is over 99%. The IUD works best for women who have been pregnant before, but there is a smaller copper IUD that women who have not yet been pregnant can use. Ask your doctor if the method is suitable for you.

The diaphragm is inserted into the vagina, where it blocks the cervical opening, so that sperm cells cannot enter. The diaphragm and spermicidal cream must be used together in connection with every intercourse. The diaphragm should remain in place for six to eight hours after the last intercourse. Ask your doctor if the method is suitable for you. If you use the diaphragm and cream correctly every time you have intercourse, your chances of avoiding pregnancy are up to 97%.
The female condom blocks sperm cells, so that they cannot enter the uterus. The female condom is placed in the vagina before each intercourse. After intercourse, you must fold the outer ring together to keep the semen inside, and then gently pull the female condom out. The female condom can only be used once. It is best if you practice placing the female condom in the vagina a few times, before you begin using the method. All women can use the female condom. When you use the female condom correctly in connection with each intercourse, your chances of avoiding pregnancy are up to 97%.

The contraceptive injection prevents ovulation and affects the mucous in the cervix, so that sperm cells cannot enter the uterus. The method is only appropriate for use by women who cannot use other methods. The injection has to be repeated every three months, and is performed by a doctor. Ask your doctor if the method is suitable for you. When you use the contraceptive injection, you have an almost 100% chance of avoiding pregnancy.

Natural family planning (fertility awareness method) is a method whereby the woman monitors her body’s monthly rhythm by measuring her temperature, secretion, or carrying out a urine test. By avoiding intercourse in the days closest to ovulation, the risk of pregnancy is smaller. There are different products that can detect ovulation, for more information, please ask your local chemist. You can also talk to your doctor about how you can determine your body’s rhythms most precisely. There is a great deal of uncertainty when using natural family planning, and the method’s effectiveness is dependent upon whether your menstrual cycle is regular or not.

Sterilisation Anyone over the age of 18 has the right to be sterilised. When you are sterilised, there is an almost 100% chance that intercourse will not lead to pregnancy.

The sterilisation of women is a method, whereby a piece of the Fallopian tubes is removed, or a clip is placed on the tube (ligation), so that sperm cells cannot come into contact with the egg.

The sterilisation of men is a method whereby a piece of the vas deferens is removed, so sperm cells cannot pass through.
**PROS**

**Condoms** can be used by all boys and men, and they are easy to use. Condoms prevent sexually transmitted diseases (e.g. chlamydia). Condoms can be bought many places, such as at the chemist’s or in a lot of supermarkets and kiosks, and you do not need a prescription from the doctor to buy them.

**Birth control pills** work right away, if you begin using them on the first day of your menstrual cycle. Birth control pills do not interrupt sex.

**Minipills** do not contain oestrogen, and the hormones do not affect your body as much as birth control pills do. Minipills do not interrupt sex.

**The vaginal ring** is beneficial, because you do not need to remember to take a pill every day. The ring does not interrupt sex.

**The contraceptive patch** is beneficial, because you do not need to remember to take a pill every day. The patch also entails a two-day “forgetfulness guarantee.” This means that the patch contains enough hormones for two extra days of protection. The patch does not interrupt sex, and works right away, if you start using it on the first day of your menstrual cycle.

**The contraceptive implant** works immediately after it is inserted, if insertion takes place within five days of the first day of your menstrual cycle. The method does not interrupt sex. Once the implant is inserted and in place, you will not feel it.

**The IUD** works as soon as it is inserted, and it does not interrupt sex. Once the IUD is in place and situated correctly, you will not feel it.

**The diaphragm** and spermicidal cream can be used by almost all women, and is an easy method of contraception. The diaphragm can be inserted up to two hours before intercourse – and if you end up not having intercourse, you can just take it out again.

**The female condom** can be used by all women, and is an easy method. The female condom protects you against sexually transmitted diseases (e.g. chlamydia) just as condoms do.

**The contraceptive injection** works immediately, if it is given in connection with menstruation. The injection does not interrupt sex.
Natural family planning is beneficial, because your hormone balance is not altered, and you avoid foreign objects in your body. The method has no medical side effects, and you get to know your body’s monthly rhythm.

Sterilisation is the most effective method of contraception we know. Once sterilised, you have the same desire and experience of sex as before, and the procedure does not affect your hormonal balance.

CONS

Condoms can slip off or break during intercourse, if they are not put on correctly. A condom is only effective, if you hold it in place while the penis is withdrawn, so the semen remains in the condom. Some men feel that the penis is less sensitive when they use a condom.

Birth control pills can have mild side effects during the first couple of months, e.g. nausea, breast tenderness, headaches, breakthrough bleeding, and mood swings.

Minipills can cause irregular menstrual bleeding, and sometimes you may miss a menstruation. Some women experience mood swings when taking minipills. Minipills must be taken at the same time every day.

The vaginal ring can, just like birth control pills, cause mild side effects during the first few months, such as nausea, breast tenderness, headaches, breakthrough bleeding and mood swings. The vaginal ring must be placed in the original protective bag before throwing it away. If the vaginal ring is discarded without the protective bag, the hormonal ingredients in the ring can have a harmful effect on the environment in waterways.

The contraceptive patch can, just like birth control pills, cause mild side effects during the first few months of use, such as nausea, breast tenderness, headaches, breakthrough bleeding, and mood swings. The patch does not work as well for women who weigh 90 kg or more. After using the patch, it must be placed back into the original protective container. If the patch is thrown away without the protective container, the hormonal ingredients in the patch can have a harmful effect on the water environment.
Contraceptive implants almost always cause irregular menstrual bleeding. They may also cause mild side effects such as acne, breast tenderness, headaches, and mood swings.

IUDs can cause heavy menstrual bleeding and increased menstrual pain – especially in the beginning. This is not the case for the hormonal IUD, however. When you use a copper IUD, you have an increased risk of pelvic infection. The IUD can also slide out, but you would usually register it happening.

Diaphragms and spermicidal cream must be inserted prior to intercourse. If you have intercourse multiple times, the diaphragm must remain in place throughout, and you should use extra cream in connection with each intercourse. The cream is inserted with a little syringe.

Female condoms can be damaged by sharp objects, such as fingernails, jewellery, and piercings. The female condom is only effective, if you hold the outer ring closed while you remove it, so the semen remains inside the female condom. The female condom can be difficult to obtain, and usually needs to be ordered through your chemist.

The contraceptive injection almost always causes irregular menstrual bleeding. When you stop getting the injections, it may take several months before your menstrual cycle returns to its normal cycle.

Natural family planning requires that the woman is exceptionally familiar with her body and menstrual cycle. You will need to use three to six months getting to know your body’s rhythm. You also have to be prepared to avoid intercourse for about ten days each month.

Sterilisation is permanent, which means that you can no longer count on the possibility of having children if you go ahead with the procedure. Men will need to use another form of contraception for about three months after the procedure. Young people between 18-15 years of age have to wait six months from the time of filing a request before the operation is performed.
Did the contraception fail? Or did you have intercourse without it?

Have you had intercourse without using contraception? Or did you have intercourse, where the contraception failed, e.g. the condom broke or slipped off? Or did you forget to take a birth control pill or minipill?

In such circumstances you can use emergency contraception!

Remember: Emergency contraception is not a contraceptive method – it is merely a fallback, in case something goes wrong.

Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception is a method, which is used to prevent pregnancy after having unprotected intercourse. The treatment either moves the time of ovulation so that fertilisation cannot occur, or it prevents the egg from implanting in the uterine lining.

You have three ways to avoid pregnancy after having unprotected intercourse:

1. Emergency contraceptive pills (i.e. “morning-after pills”), which have to be taken within 72 hours (3 days) of having intercourse (can be bought at a chemist’s without a prescription).
2. Emergency contraceptive pills, which have to be taken within 120 hours (5 days) of having intercourse (can be bought at a chemist’s without a prescription).
3. A Copper IUD, which can be inserted within 120 hours (5 days) of having intercourse (at your doctor’s clinic).

Once you have bought emergency contraceptive pills at the chemist’s:

You will receive one pill and should do the following:

- Read the package insert very thoroughly.
- Take the pill as quickly as possible after having unprotected intercourse – preferably within 12 hours, and otherwise within 72 or 120 hours of having intercourse, depending on the type of pill.

You should take the pill in connection with a meal. This will reduce the nausea that taking the pill can cause.
These pills are between 58-98% effective. The effectiveness of the pill that has to be taken within 72 hours, rises and falls in relation to when you take the pill – the quicker, the better. The pill that has to be taken within 120 hours, has the same effect throughout the entire period. However, regardless of when you are expecting your menstruation, in this case you should see your doctor three weeks after having used emergency contraception. The doctor will perform a pregnancy test just to be sure.

You want to get an IUD:
This should be done as quickly as possible and not more than five days after having unprotected intercourse. You must contact your doctor – or a contraception clinic – both of whom can insert the IUD. Before insertion, you will be swabbed for chlamydia. The IUD will protect you against unwanted pregnancy from that time on, or until it is removed by your doctor. The IUD is almost 100% effective as a form of emergency contraception.

More information about contraception

Several sources provide free information and advice on contraception:

- Your own doctor – or another general practitioner of your choice
- The health visitor, who provides all school pupils with information about contraception
- Contraception clinics. Not all municipalities have contraception clinics. Please visit www.præventionsguide.dk for a list of contraception clinics in Denmark
- You can also contact the Sexlinien for Unge (youth helpline), which provides advice on contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and other sex-related questions. If you are between the ages of 10 and 15, you can contact Privatsnak. Its telephone and chatlines are open on weekdays between 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. For additional information, please visit www.sexlinien.dk or www.privatsnak.dk (In Danish)
When traveling, it is best to bring condoms from home.

For more information, please visit:
- www.præventionsguide.dk
- www.abortnet.dk
- www.sexsygdomme.dk

Advisory services for young people
For advice on emergency contraception, please call the Sexlinien for Unge (youth helpline) afterno n. 70 20 22 66
(Monday to Friday, 3 p.m. – 7 p.m.)
or visit the www.sexlinien.dk website (In Danish)

If you are between 10-15 years old, you can get more information by contacting Privatsnak (Private talk) at tel. no, 70 20 22 81
(Monday to Friday, 3 p.m. – 7 p.m.)
or by visiting www.privatsnak.dk (In Danish)

Sex & Samfund (Danish Family Planning Association)
Lergravsvej 59, 2. th, 2300 Kbh. S
Tel. no. 33 93 10 10

Sex & Samfund works to strengthen the opportunities of all individuals to make free and informed choices about sexuality, sexual health, contraception and abortion.