

A GUIDE TO NON-HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL

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This table is an overview and is not comprehensive. There is a great deal to understand about each of these methods. It is up to you to thoroughly research the methods for yourself, talk to your health care provider about your options, and make your own decisions. The material presented in this table is informational in nature and should not be construed as a recommendation.

METHOD	WHAT'S THAT?	WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT IT?	HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT FOR PREVENTING PREGNANCY?*	DOES IT PROTECT AGAINST SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI'S)?	HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?	PROS	CONS	IS IT FOR ME?
Male Condom	The male condom is a thin covering of latex or other synthetic material that is placed over the erect penis during intercourse or oral sex. The male condom comes in several sizes, materials, colors, flavors, etc.	To guarantee the integrity of this barrier method, store condoms in a cool, dry place and make sure that they are not expired. Correct use of the condom is very important. There are many websites that provide instructions for proper use.	<i>With perfect</i> use, 98% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 85% effective. Combining with spermicide or withdrawal before ejaculation can increase its effectiveness.	When used consistently and correctly, condoms are highly effective in preventing the sexual transmission of HIV, and reduce the risk of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).	About \$1 each, depending on the store and brand. Condoms can run from \$13 for 36 at Walgreens to \$68 for just one designer Louis Vuitton.	Low cost Easily accessible Can reduce the risk of STI's	Less spontaneity Possible allergen (latex) Must use correctly and consistently for maximum effectiveness	If you are looking for an inexpensive contraceptive method that also protects against many sexually transmitted infections then the male condom may be for you.
Female Condom	The female condom is a plastic "pouch" with rigid plastic rings at either end. The closed end is inserted into the vagina; the open end remains outside of the vagina and is held in place by the plastic ring.	This female condom works by covering the entire inside of the vagina, creating a barrier and stopping sperm from making contact with the egg.	<i>With perfect</i> use, 95% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 79% effective. Combining with spermicide or withdrawal before ejaculation can increase its effectiveness.	When used consistently and correctly, the female condom can be very effective at protecting against sexually transmitted infections.	Between \$2-\$4 each.	Low cost Can be used for those with a latex allergy Easily accessible Can reduce the risk of STI's	Less spontaneity Must use correctly and consistently for maximum effectiveness	If you are looking for an inexpensive birth control method that gives the woman more control over protection against sexually transmitted infections then the female condom may be for you.

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Copper-T IUD	The intrauterine device (IUD) is a T-shaped piece of flexible plastic wrapped in copper that is inserted into the uterus by your health care provider. The copper in the IUD damages or kills sperm so it cannot fertilize the egg, and may also change the lining of the uterus to reduce the likelihood of egg implantation.	The brand name of the copper IUD is ParaGard. It is a long-term method of birth control and can remain inserted in the uterus for 12 years or longer. Because the copper IUD does not contain hormones, once it is removed you are immediately able to become pregnant.	The copper IUD is more than 99% effective.	The IUD does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.	Between \$750-\$1,500, but your insurance plan may cover a portion of that cost. Additionally, many Medicaid plans cover the entire cost of the copper IUD.	Long-term Highly reversible High spontaneity No need to worry about using it "correctly"	High cost May promote heavier menstrual bleeding or cramping Does not protect against STI's	If you are looking for a long-term, easily reversible, non-hormonal birth control method that allows for spontaneity then the copper IUD may be for you.
Diaphragm	The diaphragm is a flexible silicone cup placed inside the vagina to cover the cervix. The diaphragm stops sperm from entering the cervix. Spermicide is placed inside the diaphragm to immobilize sperm that make it over the rim of the cup.	You should be fitted by your healthcare provider for your diaphragm. It is important that the cup fits snugly over your cervix to create a tight seal. The diaphragm can be inserted up to 6 hours before intercourse and may be left in place for up to 24 hours after.	With <i>perfect</i> use, 94% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 84% effective.	The diaphragm does not protect against STI's	Up to \$200 for the fitting, from \$15-\$75 for the diaphragm itself. You must also purchase spermicide, which costs between \$10-\$15.	May increase spontaneity Highly reversible Can be carried with you	Must be fitted, requires a prescription May need to be re-fitted with weight loss/gain, pregnancy Does not protect against STI's Must use correctly and consistently	If you are looking for a non-hormonal birth control method and are comfortable with the insertion of the diaphragm, then this may be an option for you.

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Cervical Cap	The cervical cap is similar to the diaphragm in that it is a flexible silicone cup placed inside the vagina to cover the cervix. The cervical cap itself stops sperm from entering the cervix. Spermicide is placed inside the cervical cap to stop sperm that make it over the rim of the cup.	The cervical cap (brand name FemCap) differs from the diaphragm in that it is smaller in size and requires less spermicide. Also, the cervical cap should be placed in the vagina 8 hours before intercourse, but can be left in for up to 48 hours after.	If you have never given birth, with <i>perfect</i> use, 91% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 84% effective. If you have given birth, with <i>perfect</i> use, 74% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 68% effective.	The cervical cap does not protect against STI's	Up to \$200 for the doctor's fitting, between \$60-\$75 for the cervical cap itself. You must also purchase spermicide, which costs between \$10-\$15.	More effective for women who have never given birth May increase spontaneity Highly reversible Can be carried with you	Must be fitted, requires a prescription May need to be re-fitted with weight loss/gain, pregnancy Does not protect against STI's Must use correctly and consistently	If you are looking for a non-hormonal birth control method and are comfortable with the insertion of the cervical cap, then this may be an option for you.
Contraceptive Sponge	The sponge is a 2" round piece of foam that contains spermicide. It has a loop at one end to aid in removal. The sponge is inserted into the vagina and covers the cervix so that sperm cannot make its way to the uterus. The spermicide in the sponge also immobilizes the sperm.	Thanks to the "Spongeworthy" episode of Seinfeld, many people believe the sponge is no longer available. However, it was reintroduced over-the-counter in 2009. You can insert the sponge up to 24 hours before intercourse and it must be left in place for at least 6 hours after your most recent intercourse.	If you have never given birth, with <i>perfect</i> use, 91% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 88% effective. If you have given birth, with <i>perfect</i> use, 80% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 76% effective.	The contraceptive sponge does not protect against STI's	Packs of three cost between \$10-\$16.	More effective for women who have never given birth Available over-the-counter Can increase spontaneity Can be carried with you	Should not be used by those allergic to sulfas Does not protect against STI's Must use correctly and consistently	If you are looking for a non-hormonal birth control method and are comfortable with the insertion of the sponge, then this may be an option for you.

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Natural Family Planning (NFP) or Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)	NFP and FAMs involve tracking your fertility pattern in order to understand what days you are ovulating. With NFP and FAMs you avoid having intercourse on days you are most likely to become pregnant.	NFP and FAMs include tracking your ovulation on a calendar, taking your temperature daily, and/or checking changes in your cervical mucus daily. Combining these three methods is more effective than using just one. There are books, classes, smart phone apps, online calendars, and kits to aid women in tracking their ovulation more successfully.	With <i>perfect</i> use, 97% effective, but with <i>typical</i> use, drops to 75% effective.	NFP/FAMs do not protect against sexually transmitted infections.	Many fertility and ovulation charts are available free or for a nominal fee online. Basal thermometers for tracking temperature run between \$10-\$12. Natural Family Planning kits like CycleBeads can be purchased for \$10-\$15.	Low cost Tracking methods are easy to access	Must have a regular monthly cycle Can be time consuming Less spontaneity Does not protect against STI's Must be used correctly and consistently	If you would like a low cost, non-hormonal method and control of your fertility without religious implications, then NFP/FAMs may be for you.

*Effectiveness Statistics Source: Trussell, James (2007). "[Contraceptive Efficacy](#)". In Hatcher, Robert A., et al.. *Contraceptive Technology* (19th rev. ed.). New York: Ardent Media.

Suggested Resources:

- Planned Parenthood's "My Method" online tool: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/all-access/my-method-26542.htm>
- Our Bodies, Ourselves (updated and jam-packed with information): <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/publications/obos2011/default.asp>
- Fertility Awareness-Based Methods website: <http://www.fwhc.org/birth-control/fam.htm>
- CycleBeads website: <http://www.cyclebeads.com/>
- ParaGuard website: <http://www.paragard.com/>
- FemCap website: <http://www.femcap.com/>
- The Today Sponge website: <http://www.todaysponge.com/>