

SEXUAL HEALTH IN CANADA

Information on Sexual Consent,
Sexually Transmitted Infections,
and Birth Control Methods

Developed by:



This resource provides information for adults and youth on several topics related to sex education, including sexual consent, sexual transmitted infections, and birth control methods. This booklet is available in several different languages including: English, Amharic, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, and Tigrinya.



**AGE OF
SEXUAL CONSENT
IN CANADA**



**BIRTH
CONTROL
METHODS**



**SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED
INFECTIONS**

AGE OF SEXUAL CONSENT IN CANADA



No matter what age, it is against the law for someone to force any form of sexual activity on someone else without consent. This is considered sexual assault and it includes kissing, sexual intercourse or any other unwanted sexual touching.

It is also a crime if someone forces another person to agree to have sex by using:

- Physical force
- Threats
- Lies or misleading information

Persons 11 years of age or under cannot provide consent to any sexual activity.

Persons 12 or 13 years of age can provide consent to sex with anyone who is:

- Up to 2 years older than they are
- Not in a position of trust or authority over them

Persons 14 or 15 years of age can provide consent to sex with anyone who is:

- Up to 5 years older than they are
- Not in a position of trust or authority over them

Persons 16 or 17 years of age can provide consent to sex with anyone who:

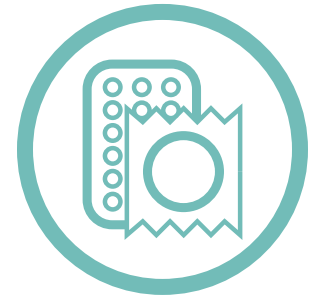
- Is not in a position of trust or authority over them
- They are not dependent on
- Is not exploiting them

A position of trust or authority may include:

- Babysitter
- Minister
- Employer
- Teacher or coach
- Doctor

Persons 18 years or older can provide consent without restriction.

BIRTH CONTROL METHODS



How do birth control methods work?

Different birth control methods work in several ways:

- By stopping the female's ovaries from releasing an egg cell.
- By preventing the male's sperm and the female's egg cell from meeting.
- By thinning the lining of the uterus so that a fertilized egg cell doesn't stick to it.
- By thickening cervical mucous to make it harder for sperm to reach the egg cell.

How does pregnancy happen?

- Pregnancy might happen when sperm from a male body meets with an egg cell from a female body.
- Sperm comes out of a penis when ejaculating during sexual arousal. Sometimes this substance is called 'cum'.
- Egg cells are stored and released within the female reproductive system.
- If a penis ejaculates in or near a vagina, sperm might enter a female's reproductive system and pregnancy may happen.

How do I decide what birth control method to use?

The following questions will help you decide which method(s) to use:

- How does the method work?

- Do I need to see a health care provider to get it?
- How well does the method work to prevent pregnancy?
- Does the method help prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the method?
- Is there anything about the method that will discourage me from using it correctly?
- Do I have any health problems that I need to think about when choosing a method?
- Does the provincial health care plan pay for it? If not, can I afford the cost?
- Will my partner(s) help pay for some of the cost?
- What are my birth control needs at this time in my life? How do I feel about an unplanned pregnancy?
- How often do I have sex? Will I remember to have my method with me every time I have sex?
- Will my partner(s) support my choice? Do I need a discreet method?
- Am I opposed to any methods because of personal beliefs?
- Do I have other health considerations that may affect my choices?

What kinds of birth control are there?

There are many different methods of birth control. Some do not require a prescription. You can buy these at a pharmacy (drugstore), grocery store or online:

- Outer condom
- Inner condom
- Emergency contraceptive pill (for emergency use)

You must see a health care provider for other methods of birth control:

- The birth control pill (oral contraceptives)
- The birth control patch
- The birth control shot
- IUD
- Vaginal ring
- Permanent birth control

THE BIRTH CONTROL PILL

What is the birth control pill?

- The birth control pill (the pill) is taken by females to prevent pregnancy.
- It contains artificial hormones similar to the natural hormones that already exist in a female's body.

How does the pill work?

- The pill stops your ovaries from releasing an egg cell each month. If there is no egg cell, you cannot get pregnant.
- The pill makes the cervical mucous thicker. This makes it harder for sperm to get into the uterus.
- The pill makes the lining of the uterus thinner so it is harder for a fertilized egg cell to stick to the uterus. Even if an egg cell is released and fertilized, it will not continue to grow.

Does the pill protect me from STIs and HIV?

- No. Using safer sex supplies every time you have sex reduces the risk of getting an STI (sexually transmitted infection) or HIV infection.
- Consider getting tested regularly for STIs and HIV.

Where can I get the pill?

You can get the pill or a prescription from:

- Your health care provider
- A teen clinic (if you are under 22 years old)
- A walk-in clinic
- A community health clinic

How do I use the pill?

Your health care provider will tell you when and how to start the pill. Birth control pills come in packs of 21 or 28. The first 21 pills in both types of packs contain hormones. In the 28 pack, the last 7 pills don't contain hormones. They are only there to help you to remember to take a pill every day.

- When you first start taking the pill, it is a good idea to also use an additional birth control method, such as condoms, for the first 14 days.
- Take 1 pill every day at the same time of day.
- Take the pill orally (swallow it).
- Follow the directions on the package to take the pills in the correct order.
- Finish the package.
- If you have a 21 pack, start a new pack of pills after 7 days off.
- If you have a 28 pack, start a new pack of pills when the last pill is finished.

You should get your period during the 7 days off (if you are taking the 21 pack) or while you are taking the last 7 pills of the 28 pack. It may not start immediately and for some people it may be very light, or not come at all. If you are taking the 21 pack, you cannot get pregnant during the week you are not taking the pills, unless you have not taken your pills correctly.

Will the pill affect my period?

- The birth control pill should help make your period become more predictable.
- You may not bleed as much.
- Your cramps may feel lighter.

Does anything stop the pill from working?

- Throwing up or having diarrhea up to two hours after you take your pill may mean that dose won't work. Talk to your health care provider as soon as you can, or call Health Links at (204) 788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257 to ask what to do. To be safe, it is a good idea to use another method of birth control such as condoms for the rest of your pill package.
- Some prescriptions or drugs that you take can stop the pill from working. If you take

any other prescriptions or drugs, tell your health care provider or pharmacist about them so they can tell you if this is a problem and make a plan that is good for you.

- Some people will initially feel nauseous on the pill, but vomiting is rare. If you vomit within one hour of taking a pill, you must take another pill. The pill may not work if you have persistent vomiting or diarrhea. Use another birth control method such as condoms until your symptoms are gone and until you have been on a new pack of pills for at least one week. Call your health care provider if you have any questions.

How effective is the pill?

- When used correctly, the pill prevents pregnancy 97-99% of the time.
- You must take one pill every day at the same time.

Are there any side effects?

When you begin taking the pill you may feel some minor side effects. If they are very uncomfortable or last longer than a few months, talk to your health care provider.

Some common minor side effects include:

- Nausea (feeling sick to the stomach); sometimes taking the pill with food or before bedtime helps get rid of nausea
- Sore breasts
- Bleeding between periods
- Very light or missed periods

Some uncommon minor side effects include:

- Headaches
- Mood swings or depression

- Weight change
- Less interest in sex
- Acne (pimples)
- Increased hair growth

Serious side effects:

A very small number of females suffer side effects that are more serious. These include heart attacks, strokes, blood clots in veins, high blood pressure, gallbladder disease, liver tumors, and migraine headaches.

See a doctor immediately if you have:

- Severe abdominal (stomach) pain
- Severe chest pain or breathing problems
- Severe headache, dizziness
- Weakness or numbness in any part of your body
- Eye problems (vision loss or blurring)
- Speech problems
- Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)
- Jaundice (yellow skin)

Your health care provider will help you decide if you should continue taking the pill.

What if I miss a pill?

- Take it as soon as possible
- Contact your health care provider or pharmacist to talk about how to continue
- Consider using another birth control method, such as condoms, until you have started contraception again for 14 days

What if I miss my period?

- Sometimes, you can miss a period even if you have taken all your pills the right way. This can be a normal side effect of the pill, or you might be pregnant. Keep taking your pills and consider having a pregnancy test to find out if you are pregnant.
- If you miss periods often, talk to your health care provider.
- If you have missed any pills and miss a period, consider having a pregnancy test done right away.

Is the pill safe for all females to use?

- No. Ask your health care provider if it is right for you. Tell them about any medical problems you have (i.e. with circulation, migraines, cancer, etc.).
- Smoking while taking the pill increases the chance of serious side effects.

Remember...

- The pill is most effective when you take one every day at the same time.
- To help you remember, consider combining taking the pill with something else you do every day at the same time, such as going to bed, eating a meal, or brushing your teeth.
- The pill does not work right away. Consider using another birth control method such as condoms for the first week or two weeks (see 'How do I use the pill?').
- The pill protects against pregnancy but does not protect against STIs.
- The pill does not protect against pregnancy once you stop taking it.

THE BIRTH CONTROL SHOT

What is the birth control shot?

- The birth control shot is a hormone given by injection (a needle). Females can use this method to protect their body against pregnancy.
- You must get the injection every three months.
- The injection is given by a health care provider, usually in the hip area.

How does it work?

- The birth control shot contains a hormone (progestin). This hormone stops your ovaries from releasing an egg cell each month. If there is no egg cell, you cannot get pregnant.
- It makes the cervical mucous thicker. This makes it harder for sperm to get into the uterus.
- It also changes the lining of the uterus so it is harder for a fertilized egg cell to attach to the uterus. Even if an egg cell is released and fertilized, it will not continue to grow.
- The birth control shot prevents pregnancy 99.7% of the time.
- Each injection gives you protection against pregnancy for about three months, so you need see your health care provider regularly to continue protection.

How soon does it start working?

- When you have the birth control injection within the first five days of your menstrual cycle, it begins working 24 hours after the injection.

- When you have the birth control injection after the first five days of your menstrual cycle, it begins working after 14 days.
- When the birth control injection is given to a person immediately after they have given birth, or had a miscarriage or an abortion, it works immediately.

Where can I get the birth control shot?

- You can get the birth control shot from your health care provider. If you need a regular health care provider, call the Family Doctor Finder at 204-786-7111 or toll-free at 1-866-690-8260, or go to www.gov.mb.ca/health/familydoctorfinder.
- The birth control shot costs about \$30 per injection. This cost might be covered if you are on income assistance, have First Nations or Inuit status, or if you have a private health plan. Talk to your health care provider if cost is a problem for you.
- If you're under 22 you can get the birth control shot at teen clinics, sometimes for free.

Does the birth control shot protect me from STIS and HIV?

- No, using safer sex supplies every time you have sex reduces the risk of getting an STI or HIV infection. If you are sexually active, you may consider being tested regularly.

How often do I have the injection?

- You must have the injection once every three months.
- You must remember to have the injection on schedule.

- If you are late for your injection, the birth control shot does not protect against pregnancy.
- If you are having penis-vagina sex, you should consider another form of birth control such as condoms for 2 weeks after a late injection, to make sure you are protected against pregnancy during this time.

What if my health care provider doesn't want me to stop taking the birth control shot?

People receiving medical care have the right to make the final decision about their care. Your health care provider may suggest alternative methods, but they should never pressure you into any particular decision. If you find that your health care provider is not respecting your needs or rights, or if you feel uncomfortable with them, you have a right to pursue a different provider. Call the Family Doctor Finder at 204-786-7111 or 1-866-690-8260.

Will it make me sterile?

No. The effects of the birth control shot are temporary and the body should return to its natural fertility within ten months after your last injection.

Are there side effects?

- A loss of bone density is expected while on the birth control shot. Talk to your health care provider for more information.
- Some who use this method have bleeding between periods, heavy periods or no periods at all.
- Other common side effects include breast tenderness, increased appetite, mood changes, headache or dizziness and a decrease in sex drive.

- You cannot stop the effects of the birth control shot immediately. The side effects are likely to last until the drug has totally worn off.
- It takes up to ten months for your full natural fertility to return after you have stopped injections.
- Side effects are caused by the drug acting on your hormonal system. This is part of how they work.
- Some females experience changes in mood or depression after starting hormonal birth control. We encourage you to talk to your health care provider if you experience these changes or are concerned about this effect.

Studies have shown that females who have used the birth control shot for a long time have a slight decrease in the calcium in their bones. This can contribute to the development of a condition called osteoporosis. Exercise, enough calcium (1000 mg/day), and not smoking can help to prevent osteoporosis for all females.

If you did not take the birth control shot on time and think you might be pregnant, you can use emergency contraception from a pharmacy or community health centre as soon as possible.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



What is a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)?

- A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is an infection that passes from one person to another through sexual contact.
- Some STIs are spread when infected body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal or anal fluids enter into the bloodstream during vaginal, oral or anal sex.
- Some STIs are spread by touching an infected area of skin.
- Some STIs can be spread to others by sharing needles/syringes/pipes when taking drugs, or by sharing sex toys.
- Some STIs can be passed from an infected person to the baby during pregnancy and childbirth.
- A person can have more than one STI at the same time.

Can STIs be cured?

There are many kinds of sexually transmitted infections. STIs are caused by bacteria, parasites or viruses. Some STIs can be cured with prescription medication. Examples of curable STIs are:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Pubic Lice
- Syphilis
- Trichomoniasis (trich)

Many viral infections are not curable. However, there are medications, which can be taken to slow the progress of some viral STIs or help lessen pain or discomfort. Examples of viral STIs are:

- Human Papilloma Virus / HPV / Genital Warts (a vaccine is available to prevent some strains of this STI)
- Herpes
- HIV
- Hepatitis C
- Hepatitis A and B (a vaccine is available to prevent these)

How do I know if I have an STI?

You may have an STI and have no symptoms, or you may have obvious symptoms. The only way to know is to be tested.

Some symptoms of an STI could be:

- Different or heavier smelling discharge from your vagina
- Discharge from your penis
- Burning or bleeding during urination (peeing)
- Difficulty urinating (feeling a need to urinate but only ending up with a trickle)
- Irregular periods
- Rash, lumps, sores or blisters in your genital or anal area (around your vagina, penis or anus)

- Irritation (redness) and itching around your genitals (penis or vagina) or anus
- Swelling around your vagina or penis or testicles
- Pelvic pain

You may have no symptoms or several together. If you are sexually active, consider a health care provider for a medical exam. You can be tested for STIs as often as you need.

What can I do to prevent getting an STI?

- Use safer sex supplies

Barriers can be used to keep each person's body from directly contacting the other. If you have vaginal or anal intercourse, you can use a lubricated latex outer condom or an inner condom or gloves to protect against STIs. Condoms can be put over sex toys to prevent transmission.

If you have oral sex, using condoms or an oral dam (square of latex) decreases the risk of getting an STI. A condom on the penis or an oral dam against the anus or the vulva prevents contact with body fluids. If you do not have an oral dam, you can make one from a condom. Carefully cut the condom from the rim to the centre of the tip and unroll it. Spread it open with both hands and place it over the area of contact, so your mouth doesn't directly touch the other person's body part.

- Never share needles or syringes

If you get a tattoo or piercing, it is safest to go to a licensed shop. You can get free harm reduction supplies from many community health centres or public health offices.

How can I be tested for an STI?

There are different types of tests for STIs. Testing may include a visual inspection by a healthcare provider, of the genital area (penis or vagina) and skin, a blood sample, a urine sample, and/or a swab sample taken from sores or genitals (penis or vagina). If you test positive for an STI, the health care provider may ask you about previous sexual contacts so that those people can receive treatment as well. All information is confidential and private. You do not need a partner's or parent's permission to get free, confidential STI testing. Testing can be done with your health care provider, at a walk-in clinic, or at a community health centre.

This brochure provides general information only and should not be considered a substitute for professional advice. Decisions about medical treatment and care should always be made in consultation with a qualified and/or licensed health care provider. If you feel that you may need medical advice, please consult a qualified health care professional.

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