



Postpartum Birth Control After a High-Risk Pregnancy: Long-acting Reversible Contraception

Quick Facts About Postpartum Birth Control

- It's a good idea for all women and especially those who have had a high-risk pregnancy.
- It allows you to plan to get pregnant again when it's right for you and your health.
- Many types of birth control can be started right after having a baby—even in the delivery room.
- The best time to choose a postpartum birth control method is while you are still pregnant.
- Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) is a great choice for postpartum birth control.

What is postpartum birth control?

The "postpartum period" is generally considered to be the first 6 weeks after having a baby. Using a birth control method during this time has many benefits for all women but especially for women who have had a high-risk pregnancy.

What is a high-risk pregnancy?

A pregnancy is considered to be high-risk if you have any of the following:

- ⊗ You have certain medical conditions (see Box) before you become pregnant.
- ⊗ You get sick while you are pregnant, such as with an infection or other illness.
- ⊗ You've had past pregnancy problems, such as preterm birth, preeclampsia, or fetal growth problems.
- ⊗ You find out that your fetus has a birth defect or other health problem during pregnancy or after delivery.

Why is using postpartum birth control important for women who have had a high-risk pregnancy?

An unintended pregnancy soon after a high-risk pregnancy can make an existing medical condition worse or lead to health problems for your baby that may last into childhood. If there is any chance you could get pregnant again after you have just had your baby—in other words, if you have unprotected sex with a male partner—using birth control is a good idea. It's possible to get pregnant as early as 25 days after having a baby. Waiting at least 6 and up to 18 months before getting pregnant again gives you a chance to become as healthy as possible. If you don't want to have more children, using birth control helps you avoid pregnancy altogether.

Health Problems That Can Lead to a High-Risk Pregnancy

Maternal medical conditions:

Bariatric surgery within the past 2 years
 Cancer
 Cardiovascular disease
 Chronic hypertension
 Chronic liver disease
 Chronic renal disease
 Diabetes
 Epilepsy
 HIV
 Maternal genetic disorders
 Morbid obesity
 Sickle cell disease

Solid organ transplant within the past 2 years
 Substance use disorder
 Systemic lupus erythematosus
 Thrombophilia
 Venous thromboembolism

Obstetric complications:

Critical intensive care unit admission
 Preeclampsia
 Preterm birth
 Peripartum cardiomyopathy

What is the best time to start a birth control method after having a baby?

For women who have had a high-risk pregnancy or who have certain health conditions, starting a birth control method is encouraged as soon as possible after having a baby. Although it's common to have a check-up 6-weeks after delivery, in reality, many women have sexual intercourse before this visit. Many forms of birth control can be started in the delivery room after you have your baby or while you are still in the hospital. If that's not possible, getting it as soon as you can after you are discharged is the next best option.

What is the best time to choose a postpartum birth control method?

















A good time to choose the birth control method you will use after pregnancy is while you are still pregnant. Prenatal care visits are a great time to talk about birth control.

How do I choose a birth control method?

The best birth control method for you is one that you are comfortable using, is effective at preventing pregnancy, fits your reproductive plan, and helps you stay healthy. There are a lot of birth control options to choose from (see the figure below). Your health care provider can help you make the best choice. It's also a good idea to be as informed as possible about all of the methods out there.

What are long-acting reversible contraception methods?

Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) methods include intrauterine devices (which are put into the uterus) and the implant (which goes under the skin in your upper arm). LARC methods are discussed on separate fact sheets. Feel free to print them out or download to your phone.

Birth Control Methods							
MOST EFFECTIVE Chance of pregnancy: Less than 1 in 100	IUDS		"LARC" METHODS			Implant	Sterilization
							
Long-lasting and works for up to:	10 years	5 years	5 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	Permanent
EFFECTIVE Chance of pregnancy: 6-9 in 100 women	Pill		Patch	Ring	Shot		
							
Follow directions for most effective use:	Take every day		Replace once each week for 3 weeks	Replace once each month	Get a shot once every 3 months		
LEAST EFFECTIVE Chance of pregnancy: 12-24 in 100 women	Diaphragm	Condoms Male Female		Sponge	Cervical cap	Fertility awareness	
							
Use each time you have sex							

To find a maternal-fetal medicine subspecialist in your area, go to <https://www.smfm.org/members/search>.

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