

# Birth Control and Breastfeeding

## Methods with a Positive Effect on Breastfeeding:

### Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

If you are breastfeeding often for the first six months after birth (both day and night), you may delay your period and lower your chances of getting pregnant. When used perfectly this method is 98% effective if:

- ✓ Your period has not returned;
- ✓ Your baby only gets breastmilk (no other food or drink);
- ✓ You breastfeed regularly with no long periods between feedings (ie. No more than 4 hours in the day and one six-hour period at night between feedings); and
- ✓ Your baby is less than six months old.

LAM requires **ALL** of these conditions to be met in order to be effective. If not, you should use another birth control method to prevent pregnancy.

## Methods with No Effect on Breastmilk Supply:

### Barrier Methods

Condoms do not impact the quality or quantity of your breastmilk. Condoms are widely available, inexpensive and you do not need a prescription. They also provide protection from sexually transmitted infections.

- **The Male Condom**

The male condom is put on the penis before sex to prevent sperm from entering the vagina. When used perfectly it is 98% effective; with typical use it is 82% effective. Often, male condoms are made of latex; polyurethane varieties are available.

- **The Female Condom**

The female condom is put in the vagina before sex to prevent sperm from entering the vagina. When used perfectly it is 95% effective; with typical use it is 79% effective. The female condom is made of polyurethane.

- **Copper Intrauterine Device (IUD)**

Copper IUDs do not impact the quantity or quality of your breastmilk.



An IUD is a small, T-shaped device that contains copper, which is inserted into the uterus by your healthcare provider as early as six weeks after giving birth. It is 99.2% effective at preventing pregnancy. IUDs cause changes in the uterus so that sperm cannot fertilize an egg; and it can stay in place for 3 to 10 years, depending on brand. Some women experience heavier periods and menstrual cramps with a copper IUD.

## Methods with No Effect when Breastmilk Supply is Well Established:

### Birth Control Containing Progestin

Some mothers find that birth control containing progestin decreases their milk supply. It is best to wait until breastfeeding is well established at about 4 to 6 weeks. Speak with your healthcare provider before choosing one of the following methods.

- **Hormonal IUD or an Intrauterine System (IUS)**

An IUS contains progestin and may decrease your milk supply. An IUS is a small, T-shaped device containing progestin that is inserted by your healthcare provider into the uterus as early as six weeks after giving birth. It is 99.8% effective at preventing pregnancy. An IUS causes changes in the uterus so that sperm cannot fertilize an egg; and can stay in place three to five years, depending on the brand. Some women experience irregular or increased bleeding in the first few months after insertion. An IUS may cause lighter periods and some women may stop having periods after several months of use.

- **Progestin-Only Pill**

The progestin-only pill is taken at the same time every day. It causes changes to the uterus so sperm cannot fertilize an egg. When used perfectly it is 99.5% effective; with typical use it is 90% effective.

- **Progestin Injection**

A progestin injection is given in the arm or buttock every 12-13 weeks by your healthcare provider. It stops your ovaries from releasing an egg every month. When used perfectly it is 99.8 % effective, with typical use it is 94% effective.

- **Progestin Implant**

The implant is a small, matchstick sized flexible plastic rod that releases a progestin hormone in the body to prevent pregnancy. It is inserted into the upper inner arm just below the skin by a healthcare provider, and once inserted it provides birth control coverage for up to 3 years. The implant is fully reversible, extremely effective, and can be removed at any time by preventing ovulation. When used perfectly and typically, the implant is 99.9% effective. Some women experience irregular or increased bleeding in the first few months. This method may cause lighter periods and some women may stop having periods after several months of use.

## Methods that May Affect Breastmilk Supply:

### Birth Control Containing Estrogen and Progestin

Combined hormonal contraceptives may reduce breastmilk supply and are not typically recommended until at least six months after giving birth. Birth control containing estrogen decreases the risk of pregnancy by preventing the ovary from releasing an egg. When used perfectly it is 99.7% effective; with typical use it is 92% effective.

- **The Pill**

The pill is taken at the same time every day. For the first 21 days the pill contains hormones, followed by a hormone-free week.

- **The Patch**

The patch is applied to the skin and releases hormones into your body. The patch is changed once a week for three weeks followed by a week without a patch.

- **The Ring**

The ring is inserted into the vagina where it releases hormones into your body. The ring stays in place for three weeks followed by a week without a ring.

### References and Resources

Middlesex-London Health Unit: <https://www.healthunit.com/breastfeeding-birth-control>

Mohrbacher, N. (2020). *Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Nancy Mohrbacher Solutions Inc., Illinois.

Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada:

<https://www.sexandu.ca/contraception/>

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action: Lactational Amenorrhea Method:

<https://waba.org.my/lam-the-lactational-amenorrhea-method/>

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