

Patient Information:

Contraceptive Methods Failure Rates

This chart shows the failure rates of various contraceptive methods. A method's failure rate is expressed as the number of pregnancies that occur among 100 women during a year while using the method. For instance, among 100 sexually active women who do not use any contraception over the course of a year, 85 will become pregnant within that year for a failure rate, or pregnancy rate, of 85%. Oral contraceptive pills on the other hand have a failure rate of 0.1% this means that 1 woman out of every 1000 oral contraceptive users will become pregnant during a year.

Sometimes you will see information that refers to a method's effectiveness rate instead of its failure rate. The effectiveness rate is just the opposite of the failure rate. To find a method's effectiveness subtract the failure rate from 100.

The "Perfect Use" column shows the number of pregnancies that would occur if the method was used consistently and correctly 100% of the time. The "Typical Use" column shows the number of pregnancies that occur with the method during actual, real-life, day-to-day use among most users and takes into account those instances

where the method is used incorrectly or inconsistently. Users of all contraceptive methods have much lower pregnancy rate than those who use no contraception at all.

The Perfect Use and Typical Use failure rates are the same for some methods. For others the number of pregnancies with Typical Use is higher...sometimes much higher. Most methods with similar Perfect Use and Typical Use rates don't require action by the user with each act of intercourse. For instance, Depo Provera is a shot given every 12 weeks; as long as the shot is received at the correct time it will provide continuous protection for the next 12 weeks with no risk of forgetting it or using it incorrectly. Condoms on the other hand, must be used correctly with every act of intercourse. If a condom is not available when needed, slips off during intercourse because it wasn't put on correctly, or the couple decides it is a "safe" time of the month, this leads to less than 100% consistent and correct use, a higher risk of pregnancy, and a higher Typical Use failure rate.

Newer hormonal contraceptive methods don't have established Typical Use failure rates yet.

BIRTH CONTROL METHOD	PERFECT USE (%)	TYPICAL USE (%)
No Contraception Used	85	85
Consistent Abstinence	0	0
Tubal Ligation	0.2	0.4
Vasectomy	0.1	0.15
Depo Provera Injection	0.3	0.3
Mini-Pills (progestin-only pills)	0.5	5
IUD	0.6 – 1.5	0.8 – 2
Oral Contraceptive (Birth Control) Pills	0.1	5
Contraceptive Patch (Ortho Evra)	0.1	? ¹
Hormonal Vaginal Ring (NuvaRing)	0.1	? ¹
Condom: Male	3	14
Condom: Female	5	21
Diaphragm With Spermicide	6	20
Withdrawal	4	19
Fertility Awareness Methods ²	2-3	25
Spermicide Only	6	26

(%) = Number of pregnancies per 100 women in one year

¹ These methods are new products. Their failure rates with typical use have not yet been established.

² Fertility Awareness methods include cervical mucus, symphothermal, and basal body temp