

Contraception and substance use

Practical advice for women



the women's
the royal women's hospital

If you don't want to get pregnant, you need to use contraception (birth control). Sometimes drugs or alcohol can affect your ability to make decisions about birth control.

Contraception will help protect you from getting pregnant

Contraception is also called birth control or family planning.

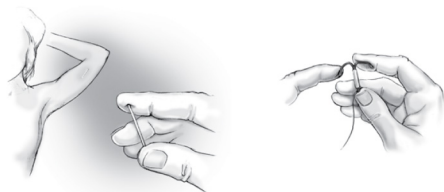
- There are several different types of contraception available.
- Some types you have to remember to take every day (e.g., the pill) or remember to use each time you have sex (e.g., diaphragm).
- There are some types of contraception that last 3 to 10 years. These are called Fit and Forget contraception or LARCs (Long-Acting Reversible Contraception).

In most cases LARC contraception can be fitted at a clinic or by your GP.

LARC

There are two kinds of Fit and Forget contraception that you can use:

- an implant that sits under the skin of your arm
- an IUD (intra-uterine device). This is a small device that is placed inside your uterus (womb).



It's very easy for a health professional to remove LARC contraception if you don't like it or are ready to get pregnant.

All contraception has possible side effects in a small number of users, so talk to your doctor about the contraception that will suit you best.

Some can even help if you have problems with your periods.

Medicare covers most forms of contraception including LARCs. Some organisations can give you contraception cheaply or even for free.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Regular condom use is the only way to protect against HIV/AIDS and other STIs.

LARC contraception will NOT protect you from STIs.

What if my partner doesn't want to use birth control?

- Ask your partner how he would feel if you became pregnant.
- You have the right to choose the contraception that is best for you. There are methods of contraception that do not have to involve your partner and don't interfere with sex.
- If you are using a LARC no one will be able to see it.

What if I want to have a baby?

- Using long-acting reversible contraception does not impact your future fertility and is a good way of planning for your family.
- If you're planning to have a baby or pregnant, talk to your health professional first. Preparation for pregnancy is better for you and your baby's health. Small changes can make a big difference to the health of you and your baby.
- Alcohol, cigarettes, and some other drugs can be very unsafe in pregnancy and may harm your baby.
- Methadone or buprenorphine are much safer in pregnancy than heroin or other opiate drugs.

Did you know?

- You can get pregnant even if your periods are irregular or you don't have periods at all.
- If you take methadone or buprenorphine, or you use heroin or methamphetamines, your periods may be irregular.
- You can safely get pregnant and have a baby if you are on methadone or buprenorphine.

For more information

- Your local doctor (GP)
- Women's Welcome Centre (Victoria only)
(03) 8345 3037 or 1800 442 007 (rural callers)
wwcadmin@thewomens.org.au

Related fact sheets

- Contraception – Your Choices
- Intra Uterine Device (IUD)
- Contraceptive Implants

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Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
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