

Deciding when or even if to become a parent is one of the most important choices you will make — for you, for your partner, and for your future. Maybe you are having sex and don't want to have a baby right away. Maybe you want to learn about how to space your children in the future. Maybe you're just curious about contraception. The point is, contraceptive methods help you plan when you will become a parent. This brochure tells you about one of the methods, so you can choose the one — or two — that seem right for you.

These choices matter to both men and women. Although most contraceptive methods are used by women, men are just as involved. Contraception seems to work best when a man and woman choose a method together and use it together!

What you should know about:

ABSTINENCE



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Health and Science
Office of Population Affairs

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What is it? Abstinence is a decision to not have sex (vaginal, oral, or anal).

How does it work? Abstinence works because sex, which enables sperm to fertilize an egg, does not occur.

How is it used? An individual makes a decision not to have sex and sticks to it. Assertiveness, negotiation, and planning skills help an individual remain abstinent.

How well does it work? Abstinence is 100% effective.

Does it reduce the risk for HIV/AIDS and STDs? Abstinence from vaginal, oral, and anal sex eliminates the risk for sexually transmitting or contracting HIV/AIDS and STDs. Abstinence from vaginal sex *only* does not reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs if other types of sex (such as oral and anal sex) occur.

What are its main advantages? Abstinence has no health risks or side effects. It can be used at any time, regardless of prior sexual experience. It allows users to focus on nonsexual aspects of relationships. And it supports the values of some individuals, families, and religious groups.

What are some possible problems? Abstinence may be hard to stick with. It requires learning and using decision-making, negotiation, and planning skills.

