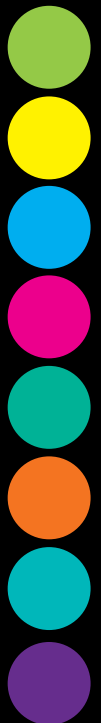


# Choose what *you* use

The FPA essential guide to contraception



With foreword by Davina McCall



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This book can only give you basic information about contraception and sexual health. The information is based on evidence-guided research from the World Health Organization, The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and The British Association of Sexual Health and HIV and National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidance available at the time this book was printed. Different people may give you different information and advice on certain points. All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method.

Remember – contact your doctor, practice nurse or a contraception or sexual health clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.

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## About this book

Do you need to use contraception? Are you wondering which method would be most suitable for you? Did you know there are 15 methods of contraception currently available in the UK?

While choice is a wonderful thing, having 15 methods of contraception to choose from can be overwhelming. Therefore, it's not surprising that many women and their partners let a health professional decide what they should use, or rely on a couple of methods they've used before. The majority of women (aged under 50) in Great Britain use just two methods of contraception – the contraceptive pill and the male condom.<sup>1</sup>

Often this means that lifestyle factors – for example, the type of relationship you are in, your medical history or daily routine – are not taken into account when choosing what contraception to use. As a result, many people don't use the method which is most suitable for them.

Finding contraception that suits you and your lifestyle is essential because:

- it stops you or a partner from becoming pregnant
- you are more likely to use it effectively
- it makes you worry less and therefore is good for general confidence, sexual pleasure and peace of mind.

When FPA conducted a survey to explore women's attitudes to choosing contraception we found that more than a quarter of women (aged 18–49 years old) spend less than 15 minutes researching and selecting a method of contraception, and that 15 per cent of women do not spend any time researching and selecting their contraception.



We also found that almost half of all women have had a pregnancy scare – thinking they were, or could be, pregnant when they didn't want to be – and 28 per cent of these women said the reason for that scare was a problem with their contraception, for example, they forgot to take a pill or the condom came off.<sup>2</sup>

There is still a lot to be done to give people the information they need to choose the right contraceptive method. This book was written to provide that information. It explains everything you need to know about *all* of the contraceptive methods available in the UK, answers your concerns, highlights lifestyle and personal factors that you should consider and provides enough details for you to make a full and informed choice.

In this book you will find:

- in-depth information on 15 contraceptive methods and emergency contraception
- an explanation of reproduction and conception
- points to consider about you and your lifestyle before you make any decisions
- a guide to contraception after you've had a baby
- information about sexually transmitted infections
- advice on how to have safer sex
- the options you might want to consider if you are facing an unplanned pregnancy
- useful resources and organisations to help you find out more.

Your contraceptive needs may change over time, for example, if you have a baby or begin a new relationship, so you can dip into this book as and when you need to.

This book is for anyone who wants to protect themselves against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Although it has been written primarily for women, all the information in the book will be useful for men. However, men might be particularly interested in Chapter 13: Male condoms and Chapter 8: Male sterilisation.

### What are the disadvantages of male condoms?

- Putting them on can interrupt sex.
- They can sometimes slip off or split.
- Some people are sensitive to latex condoms, though this is rare.
- A man has to pull out after he has ejaculated, and before the penis goes soft, holding the condom firmly in place.

### QA Can anyone use male condoms?

Yes, male condoms are suitable for most people. Some men and women are sensitive to latex condoms. If this is a problem you can use male polyurethane condoms or female condoms.

Men who do not always keep their erection during sex may find it difficult to use a male condom.

### QA When should I use lubricants with a condom?

Most male condoms come ready lubricated to make them easier to use. Some people also like to use additional lubrication. Any lubricant can be used with male polyurethane condoms.

However, if you are using a male latex condom you should never use oil-based products – such as body oils, creams, lotions or petroleum jelly – as a lubricant. This is because they can damage the latex and make the condom more likely to split.

Some ointments can also damage latex. If you are using medication in the genital area – for example, creams, pessaries, or suppositories – ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if it will affect latex condoms.

You can check the condom packaging to find out whether it is made from latex or polyurethane.

Some condoms don't have any lubricant on them so that you can choose not to use lubricant, or to use a lubricant of your own choice.

### QA Do I need to use spermicide?

No. If used correctly, male condoms are an effective method of contraception and you do not need additional spermicide.

Some male condoms are lubricated with spermicide, a chemical that kills sperm. These types of male condom are being phased out as research has shown that the spermicide commonly contains a chemical called Nonoxinol 9 which does not protect against sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and may even increase the risk of infection. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms and don't use additional spermicide as a lubricant.

### QA How soon can you use male condoms after having a baby?

You can use male condoms immediately after you have had a baby – using an additional lubricant can help to make sex more comfortable.

### QA Can male condoms be used after a miscarriage or abortion?

You can use male condoms immediately after having a miscarriage or abortion.

### QA The male condom or the female condom?

It's up to you and your partner to choose the condom which suits you best. You could try each of them before making up your mind. You may decide sometimes to use a male condom and other times a female condom.

### QA What condoms are best for oral sex?

Any condoms can be used for oral sex. However, flavoured condoms are a good option because they're not lubricated and come in a range of flavours to suit most people's tastes.

### QA What condoms are best for anal sex?

Standard condoms are suitable for anal sex – there is no evidence that stronger or thicker condoms are better or safer. It's very important that you use extra lubrication for anal sex to reduce the risk of the condom tearing.

Become a confident condom user! See Chapter 19.

What's the difference between an IUD and an IUS? How can I have control over my monthly bleeding? Are there different sized condoms? With a wealth of easy-to-read information about every contraceptive method available in the UK, this book answers all of these questions and many more.

This essential advice from the UK's leading sexual health charity looks at medical and lifestyle factors that might affect your choice of contraception, explains how to have safer sex and gives you the truth about contraception. It's a must-have for anyone who wants to choose the best contraceptive method for them.

*"I'm so delighted that there is finally a comprehensive guide to contraception. Far too often, women spend more time choosing an outfit than choosing their method of contraception. It's important to know what's available so that you can make the right choice for you. That way you can ask for what you want rather than making do with what you're given."*

*Dr David Bull*

*"This clear and practical book separates fact from fiction and is packed full of everything the reader needs to know. We can always trust FPA for good sense and information on contraception."*

*Deidre Sanders, The Sun agony aunt*



talking sense about sex

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