Talking with Your Doctor about Family Planning*

Family planning is making a choice on having children when you want to have them.

**What is family planning?**

Family planning is choosing the number of children you want to have and the time between births. We often think about family planning in terms of birth control.

**Birth Control**

You can choose from many types of birth control. You should discuss the type you want to use with your doctor or nurse. Be sure to ask about side effects, risks and effectiveness of each type.

**Types of Birth Control**

- **Condoms** prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. They are a barrier method of birth control. They also can help protect against HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

- **Other barrier methods** include spermicides (foams, gels or creams), intrauterine devices (IUDs), cervical caps, sponges, diaphragms, and the intrauterine system (IUS). These methods require an exam by a doctor or nurse, and learning the right way to use them.

- **Pills**: There are many types of pills to choose from. Pills require a prescription from a doctor or nurse, and medical checkups.

- **Injection**: This method involves getting a shot every three months from your doctor or nurse. It also requires medical follow-up.

- **Newer methods**: The ring and the patch are two new birth control options. Both require a prescription and medical checkups.

- **Fertility awareness**: This method also is known as natural family planning. It requires a woman to fully know how her menstrual cycle works. You should talk to your doctor or nurse to learn more.

- **Sterilization**: Surgical sterilization includes vasectomy for men and tubal ligation for women. Nonsurgical sterilization is only offered to women.
Know and think about your options.

Take the time to know your options. For each birth control option, think of these things:

- Your health
- Side effects
- Level of effectiveness
- How many partners you have
- How often you have sex
- Your comfort using the method
- If you want children and when
- Your lifestyle

Discuss options with your doctor or nurse.

As with any decision that may affect your health, please talk to your doctor or nurse. Your doctor or nurse will help you decide what’s best for you.

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