

## Hormonal Birth Control Demonstrations

### Recommended Age: 12+

#### Goals

- To explain what hormonal birth control is and how it works.
- To demonstrate common hormonal birth control used by youth.
- To highlight the importance of following instructions, side effects, and medication interactions.

#### Have Ready

- If possible, demonstration versions of the pill, Depo Provera, the patch, NuvaRing, ECP, and IUD/S.<sup>i</sup> If unavailable, you could also use images. (See following pages.)

#### Instructions

- Share the following information with the youth.
- You can make a short list of key points (e.g., follow directions, other medication can reduce effectiveness, side effects, does not protect from STIs/HIV) on the board or on a flipchart paper, and go into as much or as little detail as needed per method for your group.
- **“What types of hormonal birth control have you heard of?”**  
Explain that these birth control methods contain synthetic lab-made hormones (versions of estrogen and/or progesterone) that someone who can get pregnant would put into their body.
- If someone with a vulva chooses to take hormonal birth control, it increases the amount of hormones in the body, which prevents the egg from being released (ovulation). No ovulation means no pregnancy. Hormonal birth control is very effective at preventing pregnancy, 91-94% for a typical user.<sup>ii</sup> Note: If pregnancy does occur with hormonal birth control, it is usually due to incorrect use.

## Important things to remember about hormonal birth control:

### Follow Directions

- **The pill** is taken at the same time every day for three weeks out of four. If a pill is missed, or taken at a different time of day, then hormone levels may drop, causing the ovaries to release an egg. In the fourth week, no hormones are taken and this is when someone's period would usually occur. The four-week pack has the same pills for the first three weeks, and for the last week has a 'reminder' pill that does not contain any hormones. FYI: The pill becomes effective after the first month of use.
- **The patch** is worn on the body for a week at a time, for three weeks. The hormones are slowly released through the skin. It's very sticky and should not fall off in the shower or while swimming. It's important that the patch not be worn on the breasts or forehead, as this is too close to vital organs (heart and brain). The patch is only available in this one colour, but we know that not everyone in the world is this colour. This is an example of racism because they do not make a clear patch. That being said, the patch is still an effective birth control option.
- **The NuvaRing** is worn inside the vulva/vagina for three weeks. At the end of three weeks, the person would remove the ring and go a week without using it. This is usually when their period would occur. Then they would start a new ring for another three weeks.
- **Depo** is a shot/needle given by a health care provider. It lasts for 84 days. It's important to go for your next shot by the end of the 84 days to keep the hormone levels up.
- **IUD/S**, an intrauterine device or system, is a small device that is inserted into the uterus by a health care provider to prevent pregnancy. It has two horizontal arms which are folded during insertion, and then unfold into a T-shape. Some are made with hormones (IUS), and some are made with copper (IUD). Copper IUDs work by affecting the way sperm moves, so sperm cannot

meet up with the egg. Depending on the type, IUDs can be effective for 2-5 years. There is a higher upfront cost to IUDs, but they do last longer than other types of birth control. Most health plans, social assistance programs, and Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) will reimburse the cost of an IUD. Women's Health Clinic also has a program to help reduce the cost of an IUD.

### **Other Medications Can Reduce Effectiveness**

- Certain medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter, can reduce the effectiveness of hormonal birth control. Call a pharmacy at any time to ask how medication can affect different types of birth control. If medication does affect the birth control, it is important to use a back-up method. Drugs and alcohol do not interfere with birth control, unless a person forgets to take/use it or the pill is thrown up.

### **Side Effects**

- **Hormonal birth control can have side effects.** These can include regulating periods, lighter periods (people who have painful menstrual cramps are often given the pill to ease this), no periods at all (common with Depo), spotting (bleeding other times than period days), weight change (loss/gain) (Note: If it comes up, you may want to briefly address how pressure from the media to be thin can affect our reproductive rights and choices), tender breasts, more/less acne, migraines, mood swings, decreased sex drive, and a risk of (increased) depression. Tell your health care provider if you have a history of depression, because estrogen can make depression worse. Although less common, some may experience more serious side effects. Go to the emergency department if you feel suddenly hot or cold, have shortness of breath, blurred vision, dizziness, etc., as these are serious side effects.
- Depo has also been linked to a decrease in bone density<sup>iii</sup>, so you might consider taking calcium and vitamin D, using weights to strengthen your body, and quitting or reducing smoking, alcohol use, and caffeine intake. You should talk with your health care provider if you have any concerns. FYI: Weight gain can be from a normal growing and changing body. If there are sudden weight

increases or decreases, speak to a health care practitioner. Depo can lead to some weight gain, since progesterone can stimulate the appetite.

- If someone has bothersome side effects, encourage them to go back to their health care provider or a teen clinic for advice and/or another brand of pills/hormonal birth control, or try a non-hormonal method of birth control. With Depo, they will have to wait out the 84 days, as it is already in their body. FYI: People who smoke should mention this to their health care provider if discussing birth control options.
- “Hormonal birth control does not provide any protection from STIs.” “What does?” Condoms and sex dams.

## **Additional Activities**

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Emergency Contraception Demonstration
- Condom Demo (see STI chapter)
- Internal Condom Demo (see STI chapter)

## Hormonal Birth Control Images

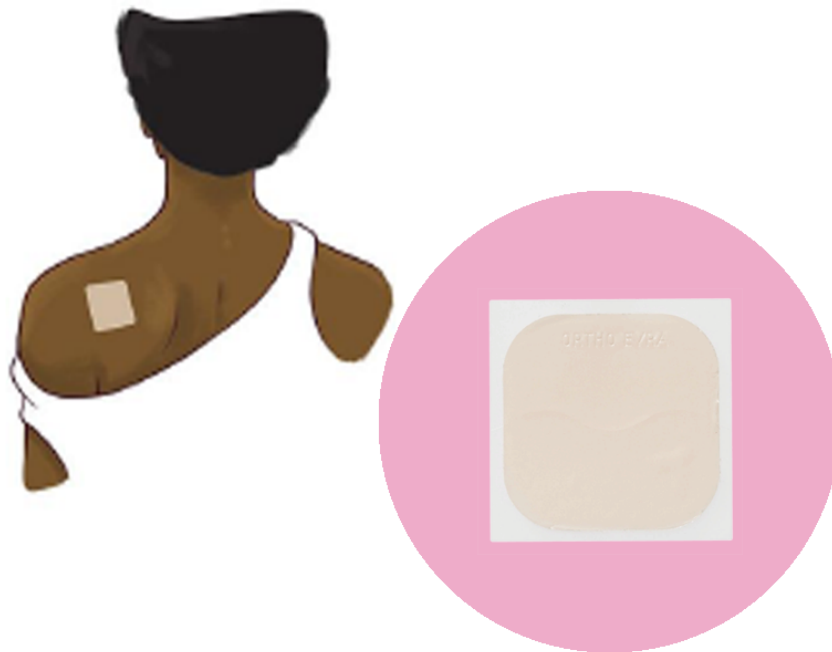
### The Pill



### The NuvaRing<sup>iv</sup>



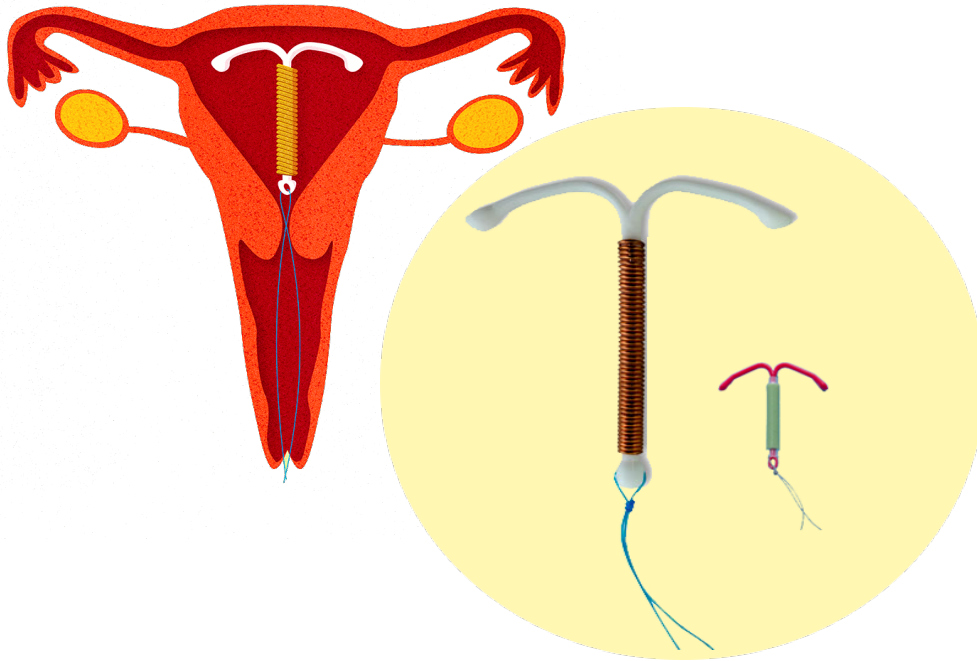
## The Patch<sup>v</sup>



## Depo Provera<sup>vi</sup>



## The IUD/IUS<sup>vii</sup>



## Emergency Contraception: Plan B



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- <sup>i</sup>Lopez, L. M., Grimes, D. A., Schulz, K. F., Curtis, K. M., & Chen, M. (2014). Steroidal contraceptives: Effect on bone fractures in women. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 6.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.cd006033.pub5>
- <sup>ii</sup>Planned Parenthood. (n.d.-a). *Birth control pill*. Planned Parenthood. Retrieved August 23, 2021, from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/birth-control-pill>
- <sup>iii</sup>Flinn, S. K. (2015, July 1). *Health facts: Depo Provera and bone mineral density*. NWHN.  
<https://nwhn.org/depo-provera-and-bone-mineral-density/>
- <sup>iv</sup>NuvaRing. (n.d.). In *iStock*. Retrieved August 23, 2021, from <https://www.drugwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/iStock-1184215932-1.jpg>
- <sup>v</sup>Planned Parenthood. (n.d.-b). *How do I use the birth control patch?* Planned Parenthood. Retrieved August 23, 2021, from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/birth-control-patch/how-do-i-use-birth-control-patch>
- <sup>vi</sup>Depo. (n.d.). <https://www.islandsexualhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Depo.jpg>
- <sup>vii</sup>Planned Parenthood. (n.d.). *IUD*.  
[https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer\\_public\\_thumbnails/filer\\_public/b5/0e/b50e7066-37bd-46d9-ba27-83805cfddf91/whitebg-iud-learn.jpg\\_1200x900\\_q75\\_subsampling-2.jpg](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public_thumbnails/filer_public/b5/0e/b50e7066-37bd-46d9-ba27-83805cfddf91/whitebg-iud-learn.jpg_1200x900_q75_subsampling-2.jpg)