

As you consider your future family and having children, utilize the following information to be informed on your choices related to birth control.

Sex was given to husbands and wives by God to glorify Him, increase intimacy in marriage, grow the family through reproduction, and teach us about ourselves and Christ. While sex is physically pleasing, outside of marriage it creates health risks, undermines relational trust, and limits intimacy. Birth control decreases the likelihood of pregnancy, however it does not prevent sexually transmitted diseases and erodes God's purposes for sex. Using birth control does not make premarital sex a consequence-free sin.

- Read Matthew 19:4-6, Genesis 2:20-24, Genesis 1:27-28, and Ephesians 5:31-32. *Why did God create sex?*

God values children from the point of fertilization and designed parents to treasure their sons and daughters. When we approach birth control with a negative attitude by considering children a nuisance, commodity, or obstacle in our future plans, we undermine the value God places on human life. Passages like Matthew 18:10 and Mark 10:13-16, reveal how Jesus clearly valued children and those who are vulnerable.

- Read Psalm 127 and Psalm 139 with your fiancé or spouse. How does God view children? According to these passages, when does life begin?

Through the study of human embryology, science confirms every life begins at fertilization when a man's sperm penetrates a woman's egg. This is seen in the fact that a whole human being is present with unique human DNA distinct from the mother and father.

Birth control is a method, medicine, or device used to prevent pregnancy. Birth control devices function to prevent ovulation, fertilization, or implantation. **Ovulation** is a monthly cycle when a woman's ovaries drop an egg to be fertilized in her fallopian tubes. **Fertilization** is when a man's sperm penetrates a woman's egg creating a whole new human at the earliest stage of development known as the primordial embryo. And, **implantation** is when the embryo, travels to the woman's uterus, and is caught by the lining of the uterus.

There are currently five categories of birth control: **sterilization** (vasectomy, tubal ligation), **long-acting reversible contraception** (hormonal implants and intrauterine devices/IUDs), **short-acting hormonal methods** (pills, patches, vaginal rings, shots, morning after pills), **barrier methods** (condoms, diaphragms, sponges, and cervical caps), and **natural rhythm methods** (abstinence and fertility timing).

60% of all women and 20% of all men of reproductive age currently use a birth control method, also known as contraception. Birth control varies in effectiveness in preventing fertilization. Hormonal methods, such as the pill and IUDs, have a 1% to 10% failure rate and may miscarry an embryo by preventing implantation before a mother realizes she is pregnant.¹ Barrier and natural rhythm methods have a failure rate up to 25%. Male contraception involves the least risk when compared to options for women. Condoms fail less than 15% of the time and vasectomies are less invasive than tubal ligation. While there is no male alternative to the contraceptive pill yet, condoms and vasectomies don't impact male hormones or risk unintended miscarriage. Vasectomies can be obtained to prevent male fertility and can also be reversed up to 4 years after the procedure if/when a couple wants to conceive.

¹ <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/contraceptive-use-united-states>

BIRTH CONTROL

Hormonal birth control methods can cause a woman to miscarry an embryo prior to implantation. These methods are also known as abortifacients.² Hormonal birth control methods utilize estrogen and progesterin to prevent ovulation, increase the thickness of mucus in the cervix to prevent fertilization, and thin the lining of the uterus to prevent implantation. The contradiction is once an egg has been fertilized a new human exists. This means methods that prevent implantation can cause a miscarriage before the mother knows she is pregnant. More than 45% of women using some birth control methods in the United States utilize hormonal birth control.

Due to the abortifacient nature of hormonal birth control methods, Watermark discourages couples from using these methods for the purpose of birth control. It is important to note hormonal birth control methods are often prescribed to treat non-pregnancy related issues including severe acne, migraines, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, and irregular, painful or heavy periods. If a woman is utilizing hormonal birth control to address a health issue, her husband can utilize male contraception to prevent fertilization and unintended miscarriage.

Before selecting a method of birth control, you and your spouse should consider:

1. How your view of children effects your choice to use birth control.
 - Are children a blessing or an inconvenient probability?
 - Do you want to have children? If so, how many and when?
2. The effectiveness of preventing fertilization.
 - Ask your OB/GYN, could this method cause a fertilized egg to not implant?
 - Which method(s) is most effective to prevent fertilization, and who will be responsible for ensuring it is used?
3. Your overall health and any possible side effects from birth control.
 - How will this method affect my body?
 - Do we need to use another method to ensure we do not cause a miscarriage?

Next Steps

- If you are on birth control for medical reasons, research and understand the short-term and long-term side effects of what you put in your body and clarify issues related to implantation with your doctor. (Resource: <https://www.webmd.com/sex/birth-control/birth-control-pills#4>)
- If you are unmarried and sexually active, communicate your thoughts about birth control with your Community Group and seek accountability to abstain from sex until marriage. (Resource: <http://realtruthrealquick.com/christian-premarital-sexual-relationship/>)
- If you are concerned that prior use of hormonal birth control may have led to miscarriage, contact healing@watermark.org.

Resources

1. **The Life Initiative at Watermark:** a ministry to women, men, and families for sex education, unexpected pregnancies, and past abortions (watermark.org/tli)
2. **ProLife OB/GYNs:** the American Associations of ProLife OB/GYNs (aaplog.org)
3. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** the national public health protection agency (<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm#Resources-for-consumers>)

For more information or questions concerning birth control, email thelifeinitiative@watermark.org.

² <https://aaplog.org/birth-control-pill-abortifacient-and-contraceptive/>