

ASSOCIATES FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH  
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### **POSTPARTUM CONTRACEPTION**

There are many different types of birth control available. The following is a list of options available for your use. Each patient will have different needs and medical histories, so please discuss any specific concerns with your health care provider.

**Birth control pills (oral contraceptives):** One of the most popular methods of birth control, the pill contains synthetic female hormones. The pill prevents ovulation, so no eggs are released. If you plan to breastfeed, your doctor will prescribe a different type of birth control pill which is safe to use while breastfeeding. You can begin taking birth control pills shortly after delivery.

**Intrauterine devices (IUD's):** This is a small plastic device inserted into the uterus, usually during a menstrual period or at your post-partum visit. The IUD works by preventing sperm from reaching the egg. Currently there are two IUD's available in the United States. One is the Para Guard T380A, which is made with a small copper filament, contains no hormones. The other IUD, the Progestasert, contains the hormone progesterone. Some women are not candidates for the IUD. If you are interested in the IUD, please check with your health care provider to see if you would be a good candidate for the IUD.

**Barrier methods:** This group of contraceptives includes the diaphragm, cervical cap, male and female condoms, and gels and creams which contains a chemical which kills sperm (spermicide). Contraceptive gels and creams are much more effective when used in conjunction with other barrier methods.

**Sterilization:** Commonly called "having your tubes tied", the tubal ligation is usually performed while you're still in the hospital after your baby is born. This surgery involves having the tubes that lead from each ovary to the uterus cut, tied, and/or burned to prevent sperm from reaching the egg. In some cases a small clip can be used which may not cause permanent sterilization, and is more easily reversible. In either case, ovulation continues as normal, but the sperm and egg cannot come in contact with each other. Male sterilization, called a vasectomy, requires a minor surgical procedure in which the tubes which carry the sperm are sealed so that sperm is not released with sexual relations.

**Depo-Provera:** This is a hormone injection which prevents ovulation for 12 weeks following the shot. This method is safe for use during breastfeeding, and requires injections of the hormone every 12 weeks.

**Natural family planning:** This method requires that you have regular menstrual periods, and that you carefully observe your menstrual cycle, as well as physical changes which occur with ovulation. You must also avoid intercourse or use a barrier method during the times when you could become pregnant.