

# Hormonal Methods of Birth Control & Breastfeeding

Hormonal methods of birth control are considered quite effective and are often easy for a woman to use. **However, for some mothers, they may impact their milk supply.**

- **Breastfeeding plays a role in preventing pregnancy** by interrupting the hormone cycle. Research estimates that if all breastfeeding were to stop worldwide, there would be a 20 to 30 percent rise in the birth rate. However, **it is possible to get pregnant while breastfeeding.** Breastfeeding should not be considered the main form of birth control for any woman unless she desires to become pregnant again.
- Some breastfeeding mothers will resume their period when their baby is a month old, while other mothers will not resume their period until they fully wean their baby from the breast. However, **it is possible to get pregnant even if your period has not yet returned.**
- Birth control methods that contain **estrogen** have definitely been shown to **decrease milk supply** and decrease the length of breastfeeding. It is recommended that estrogen methods of birth control be delayed until a baby is at least six months of age. If a hormonal method of birth control is used, it is recommended that the method contain **only progestin.**
- Progestin is safe for your baby. It is approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics for use in breastfeeding mothers. **There are several methods of progestin-only birth control:** the mini-pill (taken at the same time every day), implants under the skin (which may be effective for up to five years), DepoProvera (a shot which lasts for three months), and various IUDs that contain progesterone (an IUD is inserted into the uterus and is effective for several years).
- While research has shown that progestin-only methods do not usually impact milk supply, **some women are particularly sensitive to hormones.** Some women find that their milk supply decreases within days, and others notice a gradual decrease over days or weeks after they start a progestin-only method. For this reason, methods that are reversible – such as the mini-pill and the IUD – may be a better choice, especially if you are already struggling with your milk supply. **Depo-Provera is not reversible once it has been injected and implants are difficult to remove.**
- It is recommended that any progestin-only method of birth control **be delayed for at least 6 to 12 weeks after birth** to allow for a good milk supply to be established. This wait must be balanced with a mother's desire to prevent a pregnancy and may not be possible for some women.
- The Copper IUD, which contains no hormones, is a highly effective method of birth control. Barrier methods of birth control (such as condoms), along with natural family planning (avoiding intercourse during your most fertile time periods), may also help to prevent a pregnancy. **Exclusively breastfeeding your baby** (no bottles) for the first six months can help prevent your menstrual cycle and ovulation from returning, **but ONLY if you never go longer than six hours** between breast feedings. This is called the Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) and is 98% effective.

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