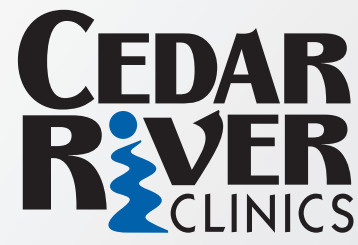


# Birth Control Comparison Chart

## Tabla de comparación de métodos de control de la natalidad

(Para español, favor de ver al dorso)

[www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info](http://www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info)  
[www.CedarRiverClinics.org](http://www.CedarRiverClinics.org)



### Cervical Cover

**Effectiveness:** 68% - 91%

**What is it?** This is a cup or cap shaped device, 1 to 2 inches across that covers a woman's cervix. Brand names are Lea's Shield and FemCap. Made of medical-grade silicone.

**How it works:** Creates a barrier that blocks sperm from passing into the uterus and prevents fertilization. Works best with spermicide added.

**How to use:** Before sex, a woman places a small amount of spermicide gel or cream into the cap, then inserts the device into her vagina over her cervix. Must leave it in place for 8 hours after intercourse. Only need to apply spermicide once, even if intercourse is repeated. Can be inserted several hours before sex.

**Health Impacts:** Insertion and removal become easier with practice. Some women have allergy to spermicide. Giving birth affects the fit so go to your clinic for a new one after you give birth. Less reliable if you previously gave birth.

**Note:** Not recommended if you have had toxic shock syndrome. More effective with good education and help to practice putting device over cervix.

**Access:** Clinic visit required. Femcap size is based upon whether or not you have given birth. Lea's Shield is one size fits all.

### Diaphragm

**Effectiveness:** 86% - 94% (with jelly or cream)

**What is it?** A soft flexible rubber dome or cup about 2 1/2 inches across that a woman fills with spermicide and inserts into vagina over the cervix.

**How it works:** Creates a physical and chemical barrier. Stops sperm and prevents fertilization.

**How to use:** Put 1-2 teaspoons of spermicidal gel or cream into center of Diaphragm. Insert over cervix. Leave in place for 6-8 hours after sex. Add more spermicide to vagina for each act of intercourse. Can be put in up to 2 hours before sex.

**Health Impacts:** Can be messy, can interrupt sex play. Some women have allergy to spermicide or latex. Spermicide tastes bad. May increase chance of bladder infections. Get a new size if you gain or lose more than 15 pounds.

**Notes:** Not recommended if you have had toxic shock syndrome. Various styles available, clinic will help find a good fit for you. More effective with good education and help to practice putting diaphragm over cervix.

**Access:** Clinic visit required to get the right size.

### Sponge

**Effectiveness:** 71% - 82%

**What is it?** A small soft round bowl-shaped piece of synthetic sponge with loop attached. Contains spermicide.

**How it works:** The Sponge is both a chemical and physical barrier. It blocks sperm, absorbs and kills sperm.

**How to use:** Moisten with water then insert along the back wall of the vagina with the dimple side toward the cervix. It can be inserted up to 12 hours before sex and can be used for multiple acts of sex. It must be left in vagina for 6 to 8 hours after intercourse. Pull the loop to remove the Sponge.

**Health Impacts:** May cause irritation of the vagina if a woman is allergic to the spermicide. Research indicates that spermicide increases the risk of HIV in sex workers when used frequently.

**Note:** Less effective (40-80%) for women who have previously given birth.

**Access:** Easy to buy at drug stores.

### Barrier Methods

**Effectiveness:** 85% - 98%

**What is it?** A soft, loose polyurethane pouch that fits inside vagina. Flexible rings at each end of pouch hold it in place. Pre-lubricated.

**How to use:** Insert smaller inner ring deep inside vagina. Larger ring stays outside over vulva. Can be inserted 8 hours before sex. Can be used by people with latex allergy. Can be used with any lubricant. Extra lubricant recommended.

**Health Impacts:** Can be messy, may interrupt sex play. Tastes bad but if you wash it off with a damp cloth before oral sex, there should not be a problem. Possible allergic reaction or vaginal irritation. Foaming types may irritate more than film or cream. Research indicates that spermicide increases the risk of HIV in sex workers who use it many times a day. When used frequently, it may irritate the vagina making it easier to catch HIV/STI.

**Note:** Lubrication may increase pleasure. VCF is particularly discreet.

**Access:** Easy to buy at drug stores.

### Spermicidal Foam, Cream, Gel, Film, Suppository

**Effectiveness:** 79% - 85%

**What is it?** A soft, loose polyurethane pouch that fits inside vagina. Flexible rings at each end of pouch hold it in place. Pre-lubricated.

**How to use:** Insert smaller inner ring deep inside vagina. Larger ring stays outside over vulva. Can be inserted 8 hours before sex. Can be used by people with latex allergy. Can be used with any lubricant. Extra lubricant recommended.

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**Access:** Easy to buy at drug stores.

### Color Codes

**HORMONAL:** Add hormones to a woman's body to alter her menstrual cycle and reproductive organs.\*

**LONGTERM OR PERMANENT:** Physically alter reproductive organs.

**BARRIER:** Place a short-term physical or chemical wall between egg and sperm.

**KNOWLEDGE-BASED:** Use knowledge, awareness and information to guide decisions about sexual activity.

\* Many people wonder if hormones are safe? The effects of hormones are both short term and long term. Women should know there is a short term very rare but serious risk of heart attack or stroke, and possible long term benefit of reduced risk of ovarian cancer later in life.

Illustrations not to scale compared to each other.

### Knowledge Based

### Withdrawal

**Effectiveness:** 73% - 96%

**What is it?** The man pulls his penis out of the vagina before climax and ejaculation (before coming). Also called pulling out or 'coitus interruptus'. Depends on male's self knowledge and self control.

**How to use:** Male should urinate and wipe the tip of penis before intercourse. Then he must pull completely out before coming. Effectiveness increases when couples work together. Even sperm outside but near the vagina can travel inside and cause pregnancy.

**How it works:** Keeps sperm out of a woman's vagina. Contrary to public perception, pre-ejaculate usually does not contain sperm.

**Health Impacts:** Drugs, alcohol, young age or lack of sexual experience can reduce ability to use withdrawal effectively. Can be difficult for teens to use. Less effective for men who have multiple orgasms. Can increase communication between partners.

**Note:** Withdrawal is one of the few options for males. It is much more effective than not using any method of birth control. A man who is willing to use self restraint shows his respect for the woman's desire to not get pregnant. Reduces, but does not eliminate risk of transfer of HIV from male to female.

**Access:** Free and available anytime.

### Fertility Awareness

**Effectiveness:** 80% - 98%

**What is it?** Fertility Awareness is learning to recognize a woman's fertile time (the days she is most likely to get pregnant) by observing and documenting the changes her body goes through during her menstrual cycle.

**How to use:** Involves calendar charting of menses plus daily documentation of cervical fluid, position and appearance of cervix using a speculum and mirror, and basal body temperature. This combined information is used to determine beginning and end of fertile time. More effective when the male partner is involved in planning and use.

**Health Impacts:** No health risks or side effects. Increases knowledge and awareness of woman's body. Can increase communication between partners. Does not protect against HIV/STIs.

**Note:** Fertility Awareness takes time and effort daily, especially at first. Effectiveness depends on consistent monitoring plus commitment to using a barrier or not having vaginal intercourse during fertile time.

**Access:** Most women or couples learn to use this method from books, classes, or online. Tools like calendar, thermometer, charts, mirrors, flashlight are easily available.

### Cervical Cover

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**Health Impacts:** Insertion and removal become easier with practice. Some women have allergy to spermicide. Giving birth affects the fit so go to your clinic for a new one after you give birth. Less reliable if you previously gave birth.

**Note:** Not recommended if you have had toxic shock syndrome. More effective with good education and help to practice putting device over cervix.

**Access:** Clinic visit required. Femcap size is based upon whether or not you have given birth. Lea's Shield is one size fits all.

### Female Condom

**Effectiveness:** 79% - 85%

**What is it?** A soft, loose polyurethane pouch that fits inside vagina. Flexible rings at each end of pouch hold it in place. Pre-lubricated.

**How to use:** Insert smaller inner ring deep inside vagina. Larger ring stays outside over vulva. Can be inserted 8 hours before sex. Can be used by people with latex allergy. Can be used with any lubricant. Extra lubricant recommended.

**Health Impacts:** Can be messy, may interrupt sex play. Tastes bad but if you wash it off with a damp cloth before oral sex, there should not be a problem. Possible allergic reaction or vaginal irritation. Foaming types may irritate more than film or cream. Research indicates that spermicide increases the risk of HIV in sex workers who use it many times a day. When used frequently, it may irritate the vagina making it easier to catch HIV/STI.

**Note:** Lubrication may increase pleasure. VCF is particularly discreet.

**Access:** Easy to buy at drug stores.

### Sex Without Risk

Sex and sexuality are natural, pleasurable parts of life. Your sexuality lasts your whole life time and is unique to you. You are a sexual person whether or not you are having sex.

People can find intimacy, emotional and intellectual closeness, pleasure and even orgasms from a range of activities that do not lead to pregnancy.

Not having vaginal intercourse prevents pregnancy and opens the door for a better understanding of your own and your partner's bodies and responses which could result in better communication and more satisfaction.

Examples include: caressing with your hands, use of sex toys, oral or anal sex, masturbation, same sex sex, telephone or talking sex, fantasizing, play-acting, reading or writing your own erotic literature.

**How to use:** Don't have penis-in-vagina intercourse. If release of sperm occurs, keep it far away from vagina.

**Health Impacts:** Anal sex in particular has a risk of STIs.

**Access:** Free and available anytime.

### Emergency Contraception

**What is it?** Emergency Contraception Pills prevent pregnancy after sex. Also called Morning After Pill. Brand name is Plan B. Contains a short burst of a high dose of the hormones in birth control pills.

**How it works:** Decreases chance of ovulation, affects the lining of uterus, thickens cervical mucus to stop sperm from entering the uterus, prevents fertilization.

**How to use:** Swallow pills as soon as possible. May be effective through 5 days after unprotected sex.

**Health Impacts:** Your next menstrual period should begin on time. If not, you should get a pregnancy test. Usually safe for women who do not regularly use The Pill due to health risks.

Most effective when used as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse. Get Plan B to keep on hand; ask your health care provider to give you the pills or prescription ahead of time.

**Note:** Not designed to be used frequently or regularly. Does not affect an existing pregnancy.

**Access:** If under 18, you must have a prescription. If over 18, you can get Plan B at a pharmacy counter with ID to prove your age.

**Access:** Prescription required.

### Barrier Methods

**Effectiveness:** 85% - 98%

**What is it?** A thin latex cover that fits over the hard penis. Also known as 'rubber' or 'glove'. Styles include lubricated or non-lubricated, ribbed or non-ribbed, bright colors or clear, flavored.

**How to use:** Place condom on tip of erect (hard) penis, unroll to the base leaving an empty space at tip to collect the semen. Hold rim so it does not slip off, especially at withdrawal. Do not reuse.

**Health Impacts:** Latex or polyurethane types block STIs and HIV. Very effective at preventing pregnancy when used with spermicides. May decrease sensation for male. Interruption may cause loss of erection. Possible allergy to latex. Lambskin or 'natural' membrane condoms do not protect against HIV/STIs.

**Note:** Use with personal lubricants to increase pleasure and make condoms less likely to break. To maintain arousal and encourage continued use, be creative and playful.

**Access:** Condoms are cheap and easy to buy. Often available for free.

### Male Condom

**Effectiveness:** 79% - 85%

**What is it?** A soft, loose polyurethane pouch that fits inside vagina. Flexible rings at each end of pouch hold it in place. Pre-lubricated.

**How to use:** Insert smaller inner ring deep inside vagina. Larger ring stays outside over vulva. Can be inserted 8 hours before sex. Can be used by people with latex allergy. Can be used with any lubricant. Extra lubricant recommended.

**Health Impacts:** Can be messy, may interrupt sex play. Tastes bad but if you wash it off with a damp cloth before oral sex, there should not be a problem. Possible allergic reaction or vaginal irritation. Foaming types may irritate more than film or cream. Research indicates that spermicide increases the risk of HIV in sex workers who use it many times a day. When used frequently, it may irritate the vagina making it easier to catch HIV/STI.

**Note:** Lubrication may increase pleasure. VCF is particularly discreet.

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Most effective when used as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse. Get Plan B to keep on hand; ask your health care provider to give you the pills or prescription ahead of time.

**Note:** Not designed to be used frequently or regularly. Does not affect an existing pregnancy.

**Access:** If under 18, you must have a prescription. If over 18, you can get Plan B at a pharmacy counter with ID to prove your age.

**Access:** Prescription required.

### The Pill

**Effectiveness:** 92% - 99.7%

**What is it?** Pills contain synthetic hormones similar to estrogen and progesterone produced by the body. "Mini" pills contain progestin only. Many types available - work with the clinic to find best formula for you.

**How to use:** Swallow one Pill daily, at about the same time each day.

**Health Impacts:** Prevents ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation), affects the lining of uterus, thickens cervical mucus which stops sperm from entering the uterus, prevents fertilization.

**How it works:** Prevents ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation), affects the lining of uterus, thickens cervical mucus which stops sperm from entering the uterus, prevents fertilization.

**Note:** A woman's "period" can occur monthly, every 3 months, or not at all, depending on how often she takes the hormone pills.

Taking antibiotics or barbiturates may make The Pill less effective. Some types of Pills can be used as Emergency Contraception. Smokers or women with high blood pressure can use the Mini-Pill.

**Access:** Prescription required.

### Barrier Methods

**Effectiveness:** 99.9%

**What is it?** A small (1 to 1 1/2 inch) plastic device with a string attached, shaped like a T. Releases synthetic progestin hormone. Inserted through the cervix into the uterus at a clinic.

**How it works:** IUD causes changes in the cervical mucus, fallopian tubes and the lining of the uterus to slow or stop movement of sperm and egg to prevent pregnancy.

**Health Impacts:** May cause more painful, heavier periods. Should not be used by women who are allergic to copper. Each month check by using finger to feel for IUD's string at cervix. The risk of uterine infection goes up if a woman or her partner has other partners.

**Notes:** Lasts 10 or more years. Removal by a clinician is fast and easy. Cost effective over time.

**Access:** Clinic visit required.

### Paragard T-Intra Uterine Device

**Effectiveness:** 99.9%

**What is it?** A small (1 to 1 1/2 inch) plastic device with a string attached, shaped like a T. Releases synthetic progestin hormone. Inserted through the cervix into the uterus at a clinic.

**How it works:** IUD causes changes in the cervical mucus, fallopian tubes and the lining of the uterus to slow or stop movement of sperm and egg to prevent pregnancy.

**Health Impacts:** May cause more painful, heavier periods. Should not be used by women who are allergic to copper. Each month check by using finger to feel for IUD's string at cervix. The risk of uterine infection goes up if a woman or her partner has other partners.

**Notes:** Lasts 10 or more years. Removal by a clinician is fast and easy. Cost effective over time.

**Access:** Clinic visit required.

### Sterilization

**Effectiveness:** 99.9%

**What is it?** A small (1 to 1 1/2 inch) plastic device with a string attached, shaped like a T. Releases synthetic progestin hormone. Inserted through the cervix into the uterus at a clinic.

**How it works:** IUD causes changes in the cervical mucus, fallopian tubes and the lining of the uterus to slow or stop movement of sperm and egg to prevent pregnancy.

**Health Impacts:** May cause more painful, heavier periods. Should not be used by women who are allergic to copper. Each month check by using finger to feel for IUD's string at cervix. The risk of uterine infection goes up if a woman or her partner has other partners.

**Notes:** Lasts 10 or more years. Removal by a clinician is fast and easy. Cost effective over time.

**Access:** Clinic visit required.

### The Pill

**Effectiveness:** 92% - 99.7%

**What is it?** Pills contain synthetic hormones similar to estrogen and progesterone produced by the body. "Mini" pills contain progestin only. Many types available - work with the clinic to find best formula for you.

**How to use:** Swallow one Pill daily, at about the same time each day.

**Health Impacts:** Prevents ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation), affects the lining of uterus, thickens cervical mucus which stops sperm from entering the uterus, prevents fertilization.

**How it works:** Prevents ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation), affects the lining of uterus, thickens cervical mucus which stops sperm from entering the uterus, prevents fertilization.

**Note:** A woman's "period" can occur monthly, every 3 months, or not at all, depending on how often she takes the hormone pills.

Taking antibiotics or barbiturates may make The Pill less effective. Some types of Pills can be used as Emergency Contraception. Smokers or women with high blood pressure can use the Mini-Pill.

**Access:** Prescription required.

### The Patch

**Effectiveness:** 92%-99.7%

**What is it?** A bandage-like patch about 1 inch square that sticks to skin. Synthetic hormones similar to estrogen and progesterone produced by the body are absorbed through the skin.

**How to use:** Apply one Patch per week for three weeks. No Patch on the fourth week. Then start the cycle over again.

**How it works:** Prevents ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation), affects the lining of uterus, thickens cervical mucus which stops sperm from entering the uterus, prevents fertilization.

**Health Impacts:** May cause nausea, breast tenderness, weight gain or loss, water retention, increased blood pressure, mood changes, headaches. Usually decreases menstrual cramps and amount of bleeding. Decreases chance of ovarian cancer. May increase chance of breast cancer. Not recommended for smokers over 35 or women with past heart attack or stroke, chest pain, blood clots, some cancers, liver disease, or high blood pressure.

**Note:** Less effective for women over 198 pounds. Taking antibiotics or barbiturates may make The Patch less effective.

**Access:** Prescription required.

### The Shot-Depo Provera

**Effectiveness:** 97%-99.7%

**What is it?** The Shot is an injection of progestin, a synthetic version of body's natural progesterone. Lasts for 12 weeks (3 months).

**How it works:** Prevents ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation), affects the lining of uterus, and thickens cervical mucus which stops sperm from entering the uterus.

**How to use:** Requires 4 trips to clinic each year.

**Health Impacts:** Most women experience changes in their period. Usually periods stop but some women have irregular bleeding. Usually causes weight gain due to increased appetite. May cause loss of sex drive, acne, hair loss, mood swings, depression, nervousness, headaches. May increase chance of breast cancer. May decrease risk of cancer of ovary or uterus. May take long time to get pregnant after last shot. May cause loss of bone density and risk of osteoporosis. Not recommended for more than 2 years or for very young women.

**Note:** Once a woman gets the shot, the hormone is in her system for at least three months. Smokers can use Depo Provera.

**Access:** Clinic visit required.

### Mirena IUD-Intra Uterine Device

**Effectiveness:** 99.9%

**What is it?** A small (1 to 1 1/2 inch) plastic device with a string attached, shaped like a T. Releases synthetic progestin hormone. Inserted through the cervix into the uterus at a clinic.

**How it works:** IUD causes changes in the cervical mucus, fallopian tubes and the lining of the uterus to slow or stop movement of sperm and egg to prevent pregnancy.

**Health Impacts:** May cause more painful, heavier periods. Should not be used by women who are allergic to copper. Each month check by using finger to feel for IUD's string at cervix. The risk of uterine infection goes up if a woman or her partner has other partners.

**Notes:** Lasts 5 years. Removal by a clinician is fast and easy.

**Access:** Clinic visit required.

### Longterm Methods

**Effectiveness:** 99.9%

**What is it?** A small (1 to 1 1/2 inch) plastic device with a string attached, shaped like a T. Releases synthetic progestin hormone. Inserted through the cervix into the uterus at a clinic.

**How it works:** IUD causes changes in the cervical mucus, fallopian tubes and the lining of the uterus to slow or stop movement of sperm and egg to prevent pregnancy.

**Health Impacts:** May cause more painful, heavier periods. Should not be used by women who are allergic to copper. Each month check by using finger to feel for IUD's string at cervix. The risk of uterine infection goes up if a woman or her partner has other partners.

**Notes:** Lasts 10 or more years. Removal by a clinician is fast and easy. Cost effective over time.

**Access:** Clinic visit required.

### Getting Birth Control

Teens and low-income women and men can usually get low-cost birth control through community clinics or public health centers. Many health insurance plans cover birth control. If you live in Washington State, apply for a year of free birth control paid by the Take Charge program. Call 800-770-4334. If a pharmacy refuses to give you birth control, please let us know.

### Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the rate of success at preventing pregnancy per 1000 women over one year's time. If a method is listed as 99.5% effective then 995 out of 1000 women will not get pregnant in one year on average (and 5 out of 1000 will get pregnant). When two rates are listed, the lower rate is "typical" use. The higher rate is "perfect" use when the method is used correctly and consistently. The rates were published in the 2004 book Contraceptive Technology. For comparison, with no birth control 850 out of 1000 women will get pregnant in one year.

### Double Up

Simultaneous use of two methods reduces chance of pregnancy. Some good combinations are a male condom and a cervical cap, spermicide and a male condom, or withdrawal and spermicide.

### Emergency Contraception Plan B, Morning After Pill

You can prevent pregnancy after sex by taking Plan B Emergency Contraception. Use Plan B if you were not planning to have sex, if the condom broke, or if you were coerced or attacked. Call 1-888-NOT-2-LATE or go to [www.NOT-2-LATE.com](http://www.NOT-2-LATE.com) to find a location near you. Plan B does not cause abortion; The sooner you take Plan B, the more effective it is.

### HIV/AIDS and STI

Despite many choices for birth control, the only ways to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections (STI) is to use a male or female condom, dental dam or plastic wrap to prevent blood, semen or vaginal secretions from passing from one partner to another during vaginal, anal or oral sex.

### Pap Tests

Regular Pap Tests are the best way to detect early abnormal cervical cells that may lead to cancer. A common sexually transmitted infection called HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) can cause cervical cancer. To protect against forms of HPV, the HPV Vaccine is an option for girls ages 9 to 26.

### Relationships

Open and honest conversation with partners, parents, and friends can help in choosing a method and in making it more effective. People who use birth control can learn a lot from each other.

### Breast Feeding

Breast feeding is 98-99% effective for birth control, but only when all three of the following things are true: when a woman breast feeds exclusively (no formula or baby food) with feedings no more than 4-6 hours apart, when it is less than 6 months since she gave birth, and when her periods have not returned after giving birth. Furthermore, breast feeding women may want to avoid using hormonal birth control because small amounts of the hormones are passed to the baby in the milk, and some types of hormonal birth control decrease milk production.

### Abortion

If contraception doesn't work or isn't used and pregnancy results, you have three options: abortion, parenting, or adoption. Abortion does not stop a woman from getting pregnant in the future.

### Human Rights

Using birth control is a personal decision. Government, parents, friends and partners should support your decisions. If someone attempts to stop you, force you, or undermine your decisions about birth control, it may be a sign they want to control other aspects of your life. You have a fundamental human right to make your own decisions about your body, sexuality and reproduction. The purpose of birth control is to allow a woman to enjoy a full range of sexual expression without worry about getting pregnant. Every woman has a human right to her sexuality.

### Choosing contraception (birth control) is an important decision. This poster may help answer your questions, such as:

- How do I use it?
- How does it work?
- How effective is it?
- Will I use it every time?
- How will it affect my partner?
- Are there side-effects?
- Where do I get it?
- What will I do if it doesn't work?

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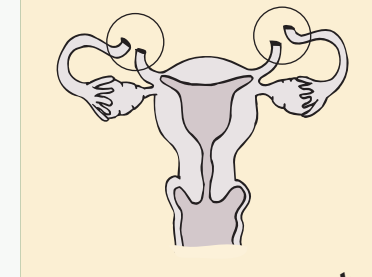
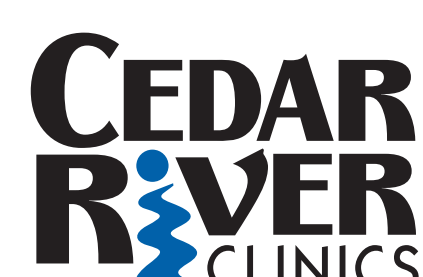
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### About Cedar River Clinics (800-572-4223)

- We have a vision of a world where all women freely make their own decisions regarding their bodies, reproduction and sexuality—a world where women can fulfill their own unique potential and live healthy, whole lives.
- We provide first and second trimester abortion, the Abortion Pill, STI testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, well woman exams, Pap Tests and free birth control under Take Charge.
- Located in Tacoma, Renton, and Yakima, Washington State, USA.

Published in April 2008 by Feminist Women's Health Center which operates Cedar River Clinics. For more copies contact [info@CedarRiverClinics.org](mailto:info@CedarRiverClinics.org), 800-572-4223, or 106 East E Street, Yakima, WA 98901.

Find detailed factsheets about each method at: [www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info](http://www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info)



once, permanent

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