

How to Switch Birth Control Methods

What is the best way to switch from one birth control method to another?

It is important to go straight from one birth control method to the next, with no gaps in between. This will help lower your chance of getting pregnant.

If you take birth control pills, you do not need to finish the pill pack before switching to another method. You can stop taking your pill at any point in the pack. If you are switching to pills from another method, you should start by taking the first pill in the pack. These rules also apply to switching from one kind of pill to another kind of pill.

You may have changes in your period after switching birth control methods. This is normal. Do not wait for your period before you stop the old method or start the new one.

When do I need to overlap birth control methods?

In some cases, you should have a few days of overlap. This means starting the new method before stopping the old method. This gives the

new method time to start working before the old one wears off. *The table* on the next page shows which methods should overlap and how long the overlap should be. The overlap length appears in bold print.

When do I need a backup method?

If you do not want to overlap the old method and the new method, you can use a backup method instead. Backup methods include condoms and spermicide. For example, if you do not want to keep taking the pill after you get your first progestin shot, you can use condoms instead. You should use the backup method for the same number of days listed in bold print in *the table*.

If you do not want to use a backup method, you should avoid having sex for the same number of days listed in bold print in *the table*.

To prevent human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other sexually transmitted infections, always use condoms when you have sex.

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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Switching to:

Switching from:	Pill	Patch	Ring	Depo (progestin) shot	Progestin implant	Progestin IUD	Copper IUD
Pill	No gap: take first pill of new pack the day after taking any pill in old pack	Start patch one day before stopping pill	No gap: insert ring the day after taking any pill in pack	Get first shot seven days before stopping pill	Insert implant four days before stopping pill	Insert progestin IUD seven days before stopping pill	Can insert copper IUD up to five days after stopping pill
Patch	Start pill one day before removing patch	—	No gap: insert ring and remove patch on the same day	Get first shot seven days before removing patch	Insert implant four days before removing patch	Insert progestin IUD seven days before removing patch	Can insert copper IUD up to five days after removing patch
Ring	Start pill one day before removing ring	Start patch two days before removing ring	—	Get first shot seven days before removing ring	Insert implant four days before removing ring	Insert progestin IUD seven days before removing ring	Can insert copper IUD up to five days after removing ring
Depo (progestin) shot	Can take first pill up to 15 weeks after the last shot	Can start patch up to 15 weeks after the last shot	Can insert ring up to 15 weeks after the last shot	—	Can insert implant up to 15 weeks after the last shot	Can insert progestin IUD up to 16 weeks after the last shot	Can insert copper IUD up to 16 weeks after the last shot
Progestin implant	Start pill seven days before removing implant	Start patch seven days before removing implant	Start ring seven days before removing implant	Get first shot seven days before removing implant	—	Insert progestin IUD seven days before removing implant	Can insert copper IUD up to five days after removing implant
Progestin IUD	Start pill seven days before removing IUD	Start patch seven days before removing IUD	Start ring seven days before removing IUD	Get first shot seven days before removing IUD	Insert implant four days before removing IUD	—	Can insert copper IUD right after removing progestin IUD
Copper IUD	Start pill seven days before removing IUD	Start patch seven days before removing IUD	Start ring seven days before removing IUD	Get first shot seven days before removing IUD	Insert implant four days before removing IUD	Insert progestin IUD right after removing copper IUD and use backup method for seven days	—

IUD = intrauterine device.

Adapted from the Reproductive Health Access Project. <http://www.reproductiveaccess.org>.