

# Contraception choices and HIV

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**Sheffield Teaching Hospitals**



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## Introduction

All women have the right to make their own decisions about pregnancy and having children. This includes contraception and abortion, regardless of their HIV status. It is still possible for a woman who is HIV positive to have a healthy pregnancy and healthy, HIV negative baby.

Effective HIV treatment, an undetectable viral load, careful planning about birth and avoiding breastfeeding all mean that there is a very low risk of a woman living with HIV passing the virus on to her baby.

If you are thinking of trying for a baby, if you are already pregnant, or if you think you might be pregnant, do not stop taking your anti-HIV drugs; talk to your doctor or nurse in clinic.

If you do not want to have a baby, or wish to delay having a baby, many effective methods of contraception are available free of charge.

'Contraception' or 'using contraceptives' means methods or techniques used to prevent pregnancy. Each of the different methods has different advantages and disadvantages.

## **I am HIV positive but not on any treatment. Which contraceptive can I use?**

The following contraceptive methods are likely to be suitable if you are HIV positive and not on treatment:

Methods reliant on you remembering to use them and using them properly:

- Male and female condoms
- Combined pill
- Progestogen only pill
- Contraceptive patch
- Vaginal ring

Long Acting and Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) methods, not reliant on the user remembering to take them:

- Implant
- Injection (depo provera)
- Intrauterine system (IUS) and intrauterine device (IUD)

**Diaphragms and caps are not suitable for women who are HIV positive**, as there can be trauma caused to the vagina during insertion. There is also the necessary use of spermicide which may increase the risk of HIV being passed to partners.

## **I am taking anti-HIV treatment. Can I still use contraception?**

Some methods of contraception are not suitable, depending on the type of anti-HIV drugs you are taking. Some HIV drugs and the hormones in some contraception when taken together, may cause the contraceptive to be less effective – this means there would be a greater chance of you becoming pregnant. Please check with your doctor or nurse. **(Please note - Your HIV drugs will still work effectively).**

## **Why does this happen?**

HIV drugs and hormonal contraceptives are processed in the liver by the same enzymes. The contraceptive is processed faster than usual when taken alongside some HIV medication, meaning it is less effective, increasing the risk of pregnancy.

## **Which HIV drugs make some contraceptives less reliable?**

Two of the NNRTIs: Efavirenz (Sustiva, also in the tablet Atripla), and Nevirapine (Viramune).

All protease inhibitors: Atazanavir (Reyataz), Darunavir (Prezista), Lopinavir (Kaletra), Fosamprenavir (Telzir), Indinavir (Crixivan), Ritonavir (Norvir), Saquinavir (Invirase), Tipranavir (Aptivus).

New drugs are introduced from time to time, so the list may change. It is important to tell the doctor you are seeing which drugs you are taking.

## **Which contraceptives are NOT affected by anti-HIV drugs?**

Contraceptives which still work effectively if you take anti-HIV medication:

- Intrauterine system (IUS) and intrauterine device (IUD)
- Injection (depo provera)
- Male and female condoms

## **I use already condoms; do I need another form of contraceptive?**

Condoms are the only contraceptives that also protect against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. If used correctly male condoms are 98% and female condoms 95% effective. However, with typical use this reduces to 83% and 79% - if not used according to instructions they can be used wrongly, come off or break.

The most certain way to prevent pregnancy and infection, therefore, is to use condoms alongside another method of contraception.

## **I have had unprotected sex (sex without a condom or other contraception), what can I do?**

Accidents can happen. You may forget to use your usual contraceptive method, or the method may not work properly, or sex might happen without any contraception.

Up to 5 days after the time of the unprotected sex, emergency contraception is available to prevent pregnancy. After 5 days, if the sex results in pregnancy the two options are either - to continue with the pregnancy and have the baby, or to have an abortion.

### ***Emergency contraception***

There are three types of emergency contraception, and you can access all methods free from Sexual Health Sheffield:

#### **1. Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) – Levonelle**

Levonelle works best as soon as possible after the unprotected sex and up to 3 days (72 hours) afterwards. If you need this method, tell the doctor or nurse you are on anti-HIV medication, as you may need a larger dose.

#### **2. Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) – ellaOne**

EllaOne works best as soon as possible after the unprotected sex and up to 5 days (120 hours) afterwards. If you need this method, tell the doctor or nurse you are on anti-HIV medication as it is not recommended to use with some anti-HIV medication.

#### **3. Emergency coil - Intrauterine device (IUD)**

The IUD is the most effective emergency contraception and can be fitted up to 5 days (120 hours) after the unprotected sex. This is unaffected by anti-HIV medication.

## ***Abortion***

If you discover you are pregnant and you do not want to be, you can have an abortion (sometimes called a termination). Abortions are legal up to 24 weeks of pregnancy and are carried out free on the NHS. Staff at Sexual Health Sheffield will help you access the abortion service.

If you are not sure what you want to do, staff at Sexual Health Sheffield and at the abortion service will talk things through with you – they will not judge you or put pressure on you in any way.

## **Where can I get contraception?**

Contraception is provided free at Sexual Health Sheffield. Your doctor or nurse will talk through your anti-HIV medication and the different contraceptive methods with you so you can decide which method is the best for you.

## **What happens at Sexual Health Sheffield?**

When you attend for your appointment, you will be asked to provide the following:

- Your name and how we can contact you - any details you provide will be treated confidentially.
- During your visit you will be asked personal information so we can provide the relevant and appropriate care.
- We have a duty of care to all our patients, so if you are 17 or under you will be asked relevant questions to assess your safety. If staff are concerned, they may talk to you about what to do about this and may contact other appropriate agencies. Sexual Health Sheffield will not tell your parents or carers that you have visited Sexual Health Sheffield.

This is the service you can expect when you attend Sexual Health Sheffield:

- All advice, information, tests, contraception, condoms and treatments are free at Sexual Health Sheffield.
- No one should judge you because of your sexual behaviour or lifestyle.
- All our services are confidential.
- All Sexual Health Sheffield workers are appropriately and fully trained NHS staff.
- All tests are optional; no examination will take place without your permission.
- Please ask questions to ensure you fully understand what services have been offered, what tests carried out and what treatments given.
- You can have a chaperone to help you feel more comfortable – please ask.
- Our friendly & professional staff are here to help you. We will give you as much support as you need (particularly if you need help on how to inform any partners).

If you feel that we have not met the above or want to give us any other feedback, please contact us via our website: [www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think](http://www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think)

## Further information

### Sexual Health Sheffield

- [www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk)
- 0114 226 8888

### NHS Choices

- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception)



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