

CONTRACEPTION AND HIV MEDS

If you're having sex and don't want to get pregnant or risk being exposed to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), **it's important to think about contraception** and what would work best for you.

There are also particular things to consider when you're living with HIV, as some contraception can interact with your medicine and make it less effective.



PrEP and PEP: preventing others from contracting HIV

If you have an **undetectable viral load**, you cannot pass on HIV through sex. That's what we call **U=U: undetectable means untransmittable**. If you don't have an undetectable viral load for whatever reason, you will need to think about how to protect your partner from HIV. They may want to take **PrEP** or **PEP**, for example.

PrEP and PEP are ways to prevent someone from contracting HIV, but **they are not types of contraception**. This means they do not stop someone from becoming pregnant and do not protect against other STIs.

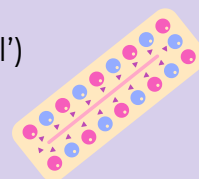
[Click here to find out more about PrEP and PEP](#)



What are the different types of contraception?

Some contraception works by using hormones:

- the combined contraceptive pill (sometimes just called 'the pill')
- the progesterone-only pill ('the mini-pill')
- the Intrauterine System (IUS) ('the coil')
- injections
- the implant
- a vaginal ring
- a patch.



Others don't use hormones:

- condoms
- the Intrauterine Device (IUD) ('the copper coil')
- caps or diaphragms, **but these aren't recommended**. This is because they are normally used with a spermicide, which can lead to irritation, sores, and skin problems. **This can increase your risk of passing HIV** on to an HIV-negative sexual partner if you don't have an undetectable viral load.



Condoms are the only form of contraception that also protect against STIs, and they are also an effective way to prevent pregnancy when used correctly.

How can I access contraceptives?

In the UK, **contraception is free**. You can ask about your options through your GP or at community contraceptive clinics and sexual health (GUM) clinics. HIV clinics also offer condoms free of charge.

[Click here to find your nearest contraception provider](#) in the UK through the SH:24 service finder.



Emergency contraception

'Emergency contraception' can prevent pregnancy after you've had sex. You can use this if you didn't use any contraception at the time, or if it failed (for example, the condom split).

There are **two types of emergency contraception**:

- the hormonal pill ('the morning after pill')
- the Intrauterine Device (IUD) ('the copper coil').

The two types of emergency contraceptive pills are **Levonelle** and **ellaOne**. **Levonelle** needs to be taken within three days (72 hours) of unprotected sex, whereas **ellaOne** can be taken within five days (120 hours). However, it's best to use emergency contraception as soon as possible. **IUDs** can be fitted up to five days (120 hours) after unprotected sex as a form of emergency contraception.

Where can I get an emergency contraceptive?



Ask about emergency contraception at **community contraceptive clinics**, **sexual health (GUM) clinics**, most **pharmacies** and **NHS walk-in centres**. You might also be able to get emergency contraception from your GP, a young person's clinic, or your local emergency (A&E) department.

Not all these places will be able to provide IUDs, so if you want one fitted, phone ahead to check.



You can sometimes get emergency contraceptive pills to keep at home for the future. Speak to your doctor if you think this would be helpful.

You can now buy the pill and morning-after pills in some pharmacies without seeing a doctor. This can be discreet and convenient if it's an emergency, but it can also be expensive. **You don't have to spend money on contraception.**

Going to your GP or a sexual health clinic will mean **you get all contraception, even condoms in some places, free of charge**. GPs and clinic teams will also be able to answer your questions and best advise you about contraception and HIV medicine.

Is there a limit to the number of times you can take emergency contraception?

Emergency contraception is **not designed as a regular way to prevent pregnancy**. But you can take emergency contraception more than once in your menstrual cycle if you need to.

If you find you need emergency contraception often, it might be a good idea to **speak to a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist** about a regular form of contraception that would work better for you.

Does the doctor need to know about my HIV?

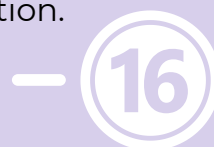
It's a good idea to tell the person prescribing your contraceptives that you are living with HIV. This includes the pharmacist if you are buying emergency contraception. This is because **HIV medicine can affect the way some contraceptives work**, including emergency contraception. **They might not work as well**, leaving you at risk of becoming pregnant.

If you don't feel comfortable talking directly about your HIV, you can just **show them the tablets you're taking** when they ask if you're on other medicines.

What if I'm under sixteen?

You can get any type of contraception, including emergency contraception, as long as you're **thirteen years old and older**. You don't have to tell your parents or carers. However, the doctor or nurse **will need to be sure you understand all the necessary information** before they give you contraception. If they are worried about the reason you need contraception, for example, if they think you might be being abused, they might need to speak to other professionals, such as social services.

If you want to get the emergency contraceptive pill **Levonelle** and you're under sixteen, you will need a **prescription from a doctor**. But if you're sixteen and over, you can buy it from a pharmacy without a prescription.



Which contraceptives are affected by HIV medicine?

People taking any type of HIV medicine can safely use the **DMPA (Depo) injection**, an **IUD (copper coil)**, or an **IUS (hormonal coil)**.

Hormonal contraception, such contraceptive pills, might not work as well for you if you take HIV medicine containing:

- atazanavir (*Reyataz*, also in *Evotaz*)
- cobicistat (*Tybost*)
- darunavir (*Prezista*, also in *Rezolsta* and *Symtuza*)
- efavirenz (*Sustiva*, also in *Atripla*)
- elvitegravir (*Genvoya* and *Stribild*)
- etravirine (*Intelence*)
- fostemsavir (*Rukobia*)
- nevirapine
- ritonavir (*Norvir*).

Emergency hormonal contraception might not work as well if your HIV medicine contains:

- efavirenz (*Sustiva*, also in *Atripla*)
- etravirine (*Intelence*)
- nevirapine.

If your medication has **tenofovir disoproxil** in it and you want to use the **DMPA (Depo) injection**, you should **speak to your doctor** about your bone health. This is because there's an increased risk of bone problems when you take these medicines together.

You can always ask your clinic team to change your HIV medicine, so it works better with the contraception of your choice.



This information was put together by **Chiva**, in collaboration with **NAM aidsmap** and supported by a **ViiV Healthcare** grant. Young people living with HIV were co-creators, and health professionals working in this field were also consulted. The design comes from Chiva associate **Ruth Muko**.

We're grateful to all who contributed their time and expertise.

Chiva is a charity which works in the UK and Ireland to ensure children and young adults growing up with HIV become healthier, happier and more in control of their own futures.

NAM aidsmap is a UK-based charity which changes lives by sharing independent, accurate, and accessible information about HIV and AIDS.

**Chiva, Orchard Street Business Centre,
13 Orchard Street, Bristol, BS1 5EH**

@chivaprojects

(+44) 0117 905 5149

www.chiva.org.uk/my-medicine-my-health