



# Options for contraception

## Key Facts and Discussion

### Facilitators' Guide

#### Thinking about your options for contraception?

The good news is that there are lots of different ways that you can prevent pregnancy and have safer sex. Here are some things to think about:

1. If you're having sex, or thinking about having sex, it's good to know how to prevent unwanted pregnancies as well as STIs, including HIV. Many contraceptives only prevent pregnancies.
2. When deciding on a contraception, you'll need to think about practical concerns – such as STI's and HIV; how long-lasting you want it to be; and whether you think you will be able to remember to take it.
3. Contraception is both partners' concern, so it's a good idea to talk about your options together. However, many contraception options are female-initiated, so it is important that the woman decides on what works best for her body.
4. **Condoms** are the only method of contraception that prevents both pregnancy and STIs including HIV. They provide a physical barrier between the guy's semen (cum) and the woman's vagina.
5. The **contraceptive pill** is taken by women and contains hormones which prevent pregnancy by stopping ovulation (the release of an egg). Contraceptive pills don't offer protection from STIs.
6. An **implant** is a very small tube (about four millimetres long) that is inserted just under the skin on a woman's arm. It releases hormones that stop ovulation and prevent pregnancy. It can last up to four years, but doesn't protect against STIs.
7. **Injections** are like the pill and the implant – they stop ovulation through the use of hormones, preventing pregnancy. They don't protect against STIs.
8. Not all of these options may be available everywhere, so talk to a local health professional you trust about the options where you are.

## Ideas for discussion

1. Why do you think it's important to talk about contraception options with your partner?

### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Groups might talk about contraception as being something that couples share responsibility for. Talking about contraception lets both partners know that they are being safe. This can reassure guys that they're not going to get their girlfriend pregnant and can help women and girls feel supported to make decisions around contraception.

2. What are some of the main things you'd want to discuss with your partner?

### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Sometimes people will want to decide together what method to use. They might also want to talk through any worries that they have, and agree on how they might share the responsibility/cost of contraception (for example taking it in turns to buy condoms).

Talking about contraception might lead to other conversations about sexual health, where couples can share their sexual health status and talk about infections they might have that could be passed on.

3. What do you think are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each method of contraception?

### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Groups might consider factors including how easy they are to use consistently and correctly (for example, the contraceptive pill relies on you remembering to take it every day, while condoms require you to stop 'in the moment' and put one on); what side-effects there are (for example from hormonal contraception); whether or not they protect against STIs (only condoms do); and how easy they are to access (cost or distance).

4. For you personally, what do you think would be the most important thing to look for in a method of contraception, and why?

### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Participants might talk about factors such as those on the list above. People will normally have different responses and any answers should be respected. But groups should recognise the importance of protection against STIs as well as pregnancy.

5. If you were to use a hormonal form of contraception (such as the implant, pill or injection) what could you do to protect yourself from STIs including HIV?

### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Groups might consider using more than one form of contraception at a time. For example using a condom as well as taking the pill. They might also talk about testing for HIV and other STIs with their partners so that they both know their sexual health status and can either get treatment or use protection.

Being in a monogamous relationship, or having fewer sexual partners, also reduces the risk of getting an STI. In some settings pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a pill that can prevent HIV infection, might also be an option.

6. Have you heard of any other ways to prevent pregnancy? Do you think they are effective, or are they just myths?

### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Other methods the group might mention include the coil, the vaginal ring, spermicide, and female condoms. Myths might include spells or herbal remedies, or relying on the withdrawal method or only having sex at certain times of the month.

7. What do you think might be some of the challenges in accessing contraceptives where you are? Do you have any ideas how to overcome those challenges?

#### FACILITATORS' NOTES

Participants might talk about stigma or disapproving or discouraging attitudes towards contraception (and sex). They may also worry about being seen to be promiscuous if they are found to be carrying condoms or taking hormonal contraception. Some methods of contraception may not be widely accessible or affordable in their area. Explore these challenges and ways to overcome them.