

WOMEN'S HEALTH  
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# Contraception: your choice

Over the last few decades the fertility rate in Bangladesh declined to 2.1 births per woman and the use of contraceptives rose to 61 percent among women between 15-49 years of age (World Bank 2010-2014).

Is this your attitude to contraception?



**D**ESPITE these successes, over 70 percent of all questions we get on our web and now mobile based question and answer app, "Maya Apa Ki Bole?" are on how to terminate unwanted pregnancies, what to do after unprotected sex and how to prevent pregnancy in general. These questions tell us that women (and men) in Bangladesh have limited information about what kind of contraception is good for them (and their partners).

Making the right decision about contraception requires quite a bit of self-education and awareness. What form of contraception you choose should depend on your general health, lifestyle, relationships and risks of contracting sexually transmitted infections.

Contraception is not only about condoms, 'the pills' and, the popular, emergency pills. As a matter of fact, emergency pills are not even an appropriate form of contraception. They are for your absolute emergency situation.

Did you know there are 15 different forms of contraception? It is important to read about these options and find out the method that suits both you and your partner.

Broadly dividing there are 3 types of contraception: barrier methods, hormonal methods and permanent methods.

Barrier methods include male condoms, female condoms, vaginal rings and diaphragms, the latter three are not available in Bangladesh (with possibility of female con-

doms coming into the market soon). We were once asked by one of our users why we always suggest using condoms. Well the answer is very simple:

It is up to 97 percent effective and if used along with natural methods such as avoiding sex during fertile period, the effectiveness can increase further. Unless you are allergic to latex, this method does not have any side effects that other hormonal methods have such as headache, predisposing to breast cancer, heart attacks and brain stroke. The method is reversible. Anytime you and your partner decide it's time for a new member of the family, you can stop using it and start trying. It protects you from sexually transmitted infections that your partner may have. No matter how "in love" you are, it is always better to protect yourself.

Couples are usually hesitant to use condoms but it is the best method in terms of effectiveness, costs, side effects and reversibility.

Now moving to the hormonal methods, there are seven different methods: oral combined pills ('the pill'), mini-pills, depot injection, contraceptive patch, contraceptive implant, intrauterine device (commonly known as Copper T) and intrauterine system (IUS). The hormonal methods mostly work by preventing ovulation. Some of these are temporary contraceptive methods and others give long-term protection. We have discussed the common ones below.