

There is no need to wait until the 'next' period to start contraception - the next period may never come

METHOD	WHEN TO USE/FIT POSTPARTUM	USE WITH BREASTFEEDING	TYPICAL FIRST-YEAR FAILURE RATE (PER 100 WOMEN)	NOTES
CHC	Day 21	Not in first 6 weeks	8	Consider after 6 weeks if all other methods are unacceptable
POP	Up to Day 21	Yes	8	Must take within 3 hours of same time each day (12 hours for Cerazette). May result in irregular bleeding
Injection	Usually 6 weeks	Yes	3	Effective for 8 or 12 weeks depending on type. Can cause irregular/heavy bleeding if given before 6 weeks. Fertility may not return for several months after stopping
Implant	Day 21	Yes	0.05	Effective for 3 years. May cause irregular bleeding
Hormonal IUS	Immediately or delay to 4 weeks postpartum	Yes	0.1	Effective for up to 5 years. After about 3 months, periods usually become much lighter and shorter
Copper IUD	Immediately or delay to 4 weeks postpartum	Yes	0.8	Effective for 3-10 years depending on type. May cause heavier, longer and/or more painful periods
Natural methods	Ask family planning advisor	Yes	2-9	More difficult to use after childbirth as fertility signs harder to interpret
Breastfeeding	Immediately	Yes	2	Only effective before periods return and when fully breastfeeding < 6 months baby (<i>ie</i> no longer than 4 hours between feeds)
Diaphragm, cap	6 weeks	Yes	16	If used before pregnancy, check diaphragm size at 6 weeks
Condoms (male/female)	As soon as needed	Yes	15-21	May need water-based lubricant if dry or sore from stitches

Starting contraception postpartum

- Following full-term delivery, earliest time of ovulation is around Day 28 in non-breastfeeding women, so start method such as condoms by Day 21
- Abstinence/barrier method needed from Day 21 after delivery until IUD/IUS/implant/diaphragm/injection. Use condoms for further 7 days after injection/IUS/implant
- No EC needed after UPSI or contraceptive failure before Day 21 postpartum. Progestogen-only and IUD EC may be used in breastfeeding women
- CHC should not normally be prescribed to women breastfeeding <6 months postpartum

Women presenting after recommended start times and protected/no sexual intercourse

- Start CHC/injection/implant/IUS with a further 7 days of extra precautions
- Start POP with a further 2 days of extra precautions
- Insert copper IUD at any time with no extra precautions

Women presenting after recommended start times and UPSI

- Abstain from sex for 21 days
- Perform a urinary β hCG pregnancy test. If negative, start contraception as above

CHC = combined hormonal contraception (pills, patches, vaginal rings); POP = progestogen-only pills; IUS = intrauterine system; IUD = intrauterine device; EC = emergency contraception; UPSI = unprotected sexual intercourse; hCG = human chorionic gonadotrophin