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If you are planning to start a family in the not-too-distant future, it is important to use a method of contraception that doesn't affect your fertility.

There are many forms of pre-pregnancy birth control, from barrier methods which are instantly reversible to those that inhibit the natural fertility cycle and therefore take longer for your body to return to normal from.

Here are some of the options open to you and the pros and cons of each...

The combined oral contraceptive pill:

This works by preventing ovulation so as soon as you stop taking it, you are safe to get pregnant. However, while some women fall pregnant immediately, others can take months before ovulation begins so if you are planning to start trying for a baby, it can be a good idea to stop the pill one or two months beforehand to let your body settle into a natural routine.

The intrauterine device or IUD:

If you want to start a family and you are using an IUD as pre-pregnancy birth control, all you have to do is have it removed in a quick and painless procedure by your GP. There are two types of IUDs; a copper-containing IUD and a hormone-containing IUD. You can get pregnant as soon as either is removed, although it might take a little longer to ovulate if you have had a hormone-containing IUD as the body recovers from the effects.

However, women who have IUDs and become pregnant accidentally are around 40% more likely to miscarry and there is a greater chance of an ectopic pregnancy.

The contraceptive injection:

This works by injecting progesterone into your system which thickens the mucus of the cervix, preventing the sperm from reaching the egg. It also thins the lining of the womb so the egg is unable to implant there. In some cases, women stop ovulating altogether.

It can take up to one year for your fertility to return to normal after the injection wears off, so it may not be suitable if you want to have a baby in the near future.

Contraceptive implants:

Fertility returns once the implant is removed, however, some women find that their periods can often be disrupted in the first year after using this method of contraception.

Barrier methods:

These are methods such as the condom, cervical cap, diaphragm and spermicides. They are instantly reversible, making them an ideal choice for pre-pregnancy birth control.

Natural family planning or the rhythm method:

Natural family planning can be up to 99% effective but it needs to be followed precisely. The advantage is you will already be very aware of your body's cycle so to fall pregnant, you simply reverse what you are doing and focus on having intercourse around your most fertile time.

It can take between three and six monthly cycles to learn your fertility pattern, so it can be a good idea to combine it with a barrier method until you are confident about using it.

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