

## Hormonal Methods of Contraception and Contraception During Breastfeeding

**Should I breastfeed my baby?** Breast milk provides the best nutrition for infants. In addition, during breastfeeding the infant receives antibodies from the mother that help the baby's immune system develop. In the United States, many women work, however, it is possible to continue to breastfeed while returning to work. Working mothers can use breast pumps to keep providing breast milk to their infants. Many insurance companies will cover the cost of a breast pump. Please contact your insurance carrier and let us know if you need a prescription. Discuss your options with your provider, family members and your employer. Many employers can provide facilities to aid in breastfeeding.

**I've heard that you can not become pregnant while you breastfeed. Is that true?** Not necessarily. During breastfeeding, the chance of becoming pregnant is lower, however, women can still become pregnant. The action of breastfeeding can inhibit ovulation (release of an egg) but it should not be the only option you choose if you want to prevent pregnancy. Please see the contraception options below to choose what is right for you and your baby.

**When should I start using contraception?** It is a good idea to discuss your options with you provider before giving birth or before you leave the hospital. Some birth control methods can be used immediately after delivery and some require a waiting period.

**Progestin only oral contraception or "the mini pill"** - This pill contains only progestin (a female hormone). This method, when used daily, is highly effective for preventing pregnancy and is safe for women to take while breastfeeding. This method of contraception has a slightly higher failure rate than oral contraceptives that contain both estrogen and progestin. But, during breastfeeding, women are not as fertile, and estrogen can decrease a women's milk supply therefore the progestin only pill is a good option. This form of birth control works best when taken at the same time each day or as close to the same time as possible. A small amount of the hormone passes into the breast milk but has no known effects on the infant.

Indeed, some studies have suggested a good effect of the quality and quantity of breast milk. When the woman stops breastfeeding, some providers suggest switching to a combination (estrogen and progestin) oral contraceptives which have a slightly higher effectiveness.

**Combination Oral Contraceptive pill or “the pill”**- This pill contains both estrogen and progestin. The American Academy of Pediatrics has approved the use of low dose oral contraceptives in breastfeeding women once milk production is well established. If oral contraceptives are chosen, they can be started six weeks after delivery.

**Subdermal Implants- The Nexplanon.** This form of birth control is implanted in the upper arm. It is small, flexible and lasts for up to three years. The Nexplanon puts a small and steady stream of a type of progestin into your body to prevent pregnancy. It is safe to use while breastfeeding and is a highly effective form of birth control. This can be inserted any time in the office after delivery.

**Intrauterine Devices or the “IUD”**-The IUD is a device that is inserted in the office and it is placed directly in the uterus. There are two types of IUD’s that are available. The Paragard is a copper IUD that can be inserted 6-12 weeks after delivery. It is free of hormones and can last up to ten years. The Mirena is an IUD that has a small amount of a type of progestin. The progestin in this IUD is designed to thin the lining of the uterus so that periods each month are light or non existent. The Mirena can be inserted 6-12 weeks after delivery and lasts for 5 years. Both if these IUD’s can be used while breastfeeding.

**Condoms and Spermicides**- These have no impact on breast feeding and can be used at any time. Additionally, they will protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s).

**Injectable Contraception or “Depo”**- This is a medication that is a type of progestin that is given every 12 weeks through an injection in the arm or buttocks. Depo Provera is safe to use while breastfeeding and is highly effective.

Please feel free to contact the office with any questions or concerns. The providers at Women Gynecology and Childbirth Associates are here for you.