

# Choosing Contraception after having a Baby

## Information for Women — Obstetrics & Gynaecology

*Contraception may be the last thing on your mind when you have just had a baby, but it is something you need to think about if you want to delay or avoid another pregnancy. Many unplanned pregnancies happen in the first few months after childbirth, so even if you're not interested in sex at the moment, it is better to be prepared.*

### How soon can I have sex again?

You can have sex as soon as you and your partner want to. Having a baby causes many physical and emotional changes for both partners and it may take some time before you feel comfortable or ready to have sex.

### How soon can I get pregnant again?

If you are not using effective contraception, you can get pregnant again from 21 days (3 weeks) after the birth of your baby.

After a caesarean section your body needs some time to heal and it is strongly advised to delay your next pregnancy for 12-18 months.

**See the next page for contraceptive options available following child birth.**

### A note on breastfeeding as a contraceptive

Breastfeeding is also known as lactation. When used as a contraceptive, it is known as lactational amenorrhoea (LAM). LAM can be up to 98% effective in preventing pregnancy, if all of the following THREE conditions apply:

1. Your baby is less than 6 months old **and**
2. You are having no menstrual periods **and**
3. You are fully breastfeeding **or** you are nearly fully breastfeeding You **MUST** be breastfeeding **AT LEAST** every 4 hours during the daytime and **AT LEAST** every 6 hours overnight.

**The risk of pregnancy increases if ANY of the following three conditions apply:**

1. You start breastfeeding less often **or**
2. There are longer intervals between feeds – day time (longer than 4 hours) and/or night

time (longer than 6 hours) **or**

3. You stop night feeding and/or use supplement/formula feeding.

Once your baby is over 6 months old, the risk of pregnancy with LAM increases. So even if you do not have your periods back, and you continue to fully (or nearly fully) breastfeed, you should start using an alternative contraceptive method (see list on the next page).

### Can I use emergency contraception after the birth?

- If you are not using effective contraception, and you have sex after your baby is 21 days old, then you are at risk of falling pregnant and you should take emergency contraception.
- You can use emergency pills from 21 day. You can use the emergency Inter Uterine Device from 28 days.
- If you are breastfeeding, using the emergency pill will not harm your baby or affect the breastmilk.
- The emergency contraceptive pill is available free or low cost from your GP or Family Planning. You can also buy them from a pharmacy after talking with the pharmacist if you are aged 16 years or over.

### Where can I get more information?

- Your LMC
- Your GP
- Family Planning:  
[www.familyplanning.org.nz](http://www.familyplanning.org.nz)  
ph: (03) 379-0514

## Effective contraception—what methods can I choose?

Method	When to start post baby	Where to get it	How long it lasts	Failure rates- Chances of getting pregnant
<b>If I am BREASTFEEDING</b>				
<b>Fully breastfeeding (LAM method)</b>	immediately	advice from midwife or lactation consultant	Up to six months	0.5-2.0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baby has no other food/formula</li> <li>Minimum of 4 hourly between day-time breastfeeds and 6 hourly night-time breastfeeds</li> <li>Baby is less than 6 months old</li> <li>You are not having periods</li> </ul>				
<b>Condoms</b>	immediately	midwife, ward doctor, GP, Family Planning		18%
<b>Progestogen-only pill (minipill)</b>	immediately	midwife, ward doctor, GP, Family Planning		0.5-8.0%
<b>Injection (Depo Provera)</b>	six weeks	ward doctor, GP, Family Planning	12 weeks / injection	0.8%
<b>Implants (such as Jadelle)</b>	six weeks	ward doctor, GP, Family Planning	up to 5 years	0.10%
<b>Intra Uterine Device (IUD) (copper IUD or Mirena IUS)</b>	4-6 weeks	GP or Family Planning	Copper- 5-10 years Mirena- up to 5 years	IUD 0.1-1.0% IUS 0.2%
<b>Sterilisation (male or female)</b>	after one year	male: specialist GPs or urology specialist female: gynaecologist, ask your GP for referral	permanent	Male 0.15% Female 0.50%
<b>If I am NOT BREASTFEEDING</b>				
All of the above, <b>OR</b>				
<b>Combined oral contraceptive (the pill)</b>	3 weeks	midwife, ward doctor, GP or Family Planning	as long as you continue to take it	0.1-5.0% depending on how well instructions are followed