

Breast/Chestfeeding as Contraception

Lactational amenorrhea, LAM, nursing



How does breast/chestfeeding as contraception work?



- When you ovulate, your ovaries release an egg. Pregnancy happens when sperm fertilizes an egg. **When you practice breast/chestfeeding as contraception, your body releases a hormone, which prevents ovulation, so there is no egg released.**
- Breast/chestfeeding as contraception works for people of **all ages, all weights, and those using gender affirming hormone therapy.**

How do you use breast/chestfeeding as contraception?

practice
daily

You must meet the criteria for **practicing breast/chestfeeding as contraception every day since giving birth**, regardless of if you are having sex that day. If you stop, you cannot restart.

- Breast/chestfeeding as contraception can be practiced immediately after having a baby and **until 6 months postpartum or until you get your period**, whichever comes first. At that time, you must stop relying on breast/chestfeeding for pregnancy prevention and you will need to use another contraceptive even if you continue breast/chestfeeding.
- To use breast/chestfeeding as contraception you must be exclusively breast/chestfeeding. This means you are **only nursing, not pumping, not using formula, and not providing other beverages or foods** to your baby. You must breastfeed **at least every 4 hours during the day and every 6 hours at night.**
- A lactation consultant can help you initiate breast/chestfeeding and respond to any challenges.



Privacy and control

- You do not need a provider to start or stop using breast/chestfeeding as contraception. Your provider can counsel you on how to breastfeed so that it works for pregnancy prevention.
- While wanting to breastfeed exclusively is in your control, there are reasons sometimes it is not possible due to your or your baby's health, or realities of life, like having to go to work or letting your baby sleep through the night.
- Your partner will likely know that you are exclusively breast/chestfeeding.
- It is likely someone else will know that you are exclusively breast/chestfeeding, too.

When starting breast/chestfeeding as contraception, will it work immediately?



Yes, breast/chestfeeding as contraception will work as soon as you begin nursing when your baby is born.



Breast/chestfeeding as contraception may not be right for people who

- Cannot exclusively breastfeed and are pumping or using formula.
- Cannot nurse at least every 4 hours during the day and every 6 hours at night.
- Have introduced other beverages or foods into their baby's diet.



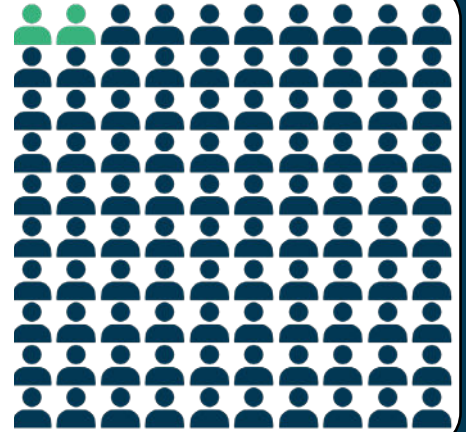
Use emergency contraception if

- **You are not exclusively nursing as instructed.**
- **You are going longer between feedings (4 hours during day, 6 hours at night).**
- **Your period has started or you are more than 6 months postpartum.**

If you plan to use breast/chestfeeding to prevent pregnancy, it may be a good idea to have emergency contraception pills on hand before you need them.

How well does breast/chestfeeding as contraception prevent pregnancy?

- **2 out of 100 people using breast/chestfeeding as contraception will get pregnant each year.** This means it is **98% effective.** This data is for those who follow the instructions to make breast/chestfeeding work as pregnancy prevention perfectly. If you do not, breast/chestfeeding is much less effective at preventing pregnancy.
- **You can use another method of contraception while breast/chestfeeding to provide more protection against pregnancy.**



Side effects

Sexually transmitted infections: Does not prevent.

- Use external or internal condoms to lower your risk of all sexually transmitted infections.

Period: No effect.

Period cramps: No effect.

Weight: No effect.

Acne: No effect.

Fertility return: Return to fertility varies for postpartum people.

Other possible side effects:

- Breast/chestfeeding helps lower the risk of breast cancer.
- Breast/chestfeeding has many health benefits for your baby.



Postpartum use

You must begin practicing breast/chestfeeding as contraception right after giving birth. It can increase postpartum bleeding in the first few weeks after delivery and then decrease.



Contact your provider if

- You have questions about breast/chestfeeding.
- You have stopped exclusively breast/chestfeeding and need another method of contraception.



Questions to ask your provider

- How do I use breast/chestfeeding for contraception?
- How do I know if I have ovulated?
- What should I do if I have not followed the criteria perfectly?
- Why does pumping not work?

Scan for a contraception guide and information sheets on each method.

