



Contraceptive Choice and Access

Having access to affordable birth control provides American families freedom and flexibility with their family planning. Contraception is a vital tool for health and economic opportunity, which is why the majority of Americans across the political spectrum [support increased access](#).

However, millions of people still struggle to get the contraception they need. 21 million women in the United States [cannot afford birth control without financial support](#), and nearly 1 in 5 women of reproductive age say it's difficult to access contraceptive care in their state, [especially for those who are uninsured](#).

Closing Gaps in Access through Policy Reform

- **Increase affordability:** The goal is to ensure everyone can afford the method that works best for them, which requires robust insurance coverage for family planning services and a safety net system so that those who slip through the coverage cracks still have access to affordable care.
- **Increase funding:** Federal funding for high-quality family planning through [Title X](#) has been stagnant for more than a decade, and has not been adjusted for inflation or annual increases in population.
- **Increase practical access:** Other barriers to accessing birth control include time, transportation, childcare, and more.
 - › Some barriers to access can be alleviated by integrating family planning services in primary care settings.
 - › Requiring a visit to a physician's office to access birth control creates an additional set of barriers.
 - › Alternative distribution channels such as over-the-counter oral hormonal contraception and pharmacist-prescribed birth control can increase access in areas with limited health care.

What is contraception?

Contraception, or birth control, includes medicine, devices, and behaviors that prevent pregnancy, with methods including pills, injectables, condoms, and intrauterine devices (IUDs). In addition to preventing pregnancy, some forms of birth control also can be used for managing menstrual cramps and mood disorders, as well as other chronic women's health conditions.

Some methods are designed for routine use, while emergency contraception is designed to be used in case a primary birth control method fails or if intercourse was unplanned or nonconsensual. [Emergency contraception does not terminate an existing pregnancy](#) or cause an abortion. It only works if a woman is not already pregnant. [1 in 4 \(24%\) women under the age of 36 report using emergency contraception in the past 12 months](#).

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