



# Contraception is about Everyone

Decolonising Contraception

Contraception has traditionally been seen as the domain for cis-women. The primary focus has been to unplanned pregnancy and or used to limit a person's reproductive freedom.

Contraception was created to avoid pregnancy but has many other uses such as for polycystic ovarian syndrome, regulating menstruation cycle, reducing endometriosis symptoms and or stopping periods as part of transitioning.

We want everyone to be knowledgeable about contraception, its many uses and hear the experienced of contraception use a part of the discourse.

# The Femidom



95% effective with perfect use, typical use is 79%.

Made of a thinner plastic than the male condom, the Femidom sits inside the vagina and the opening sits just outside.

Stops sperm entering the womb.

Can be put in ahead of time, so less likely to kill the vibe.

## The good?



Protects you against some sexually transmitted infections.  
Few side effects, although some people need latex free variety.  
No hormones.  
No spermicide.

## The bad?

The penis can end up going outside the femidom and into the vagina, uncovered.  
Must check!  
After sex, don't stand up until it is safely twisted up and pulled out, to prevent sperm leaking.

# The good?



In the UK, we mainly give Depo-Provera which lasts 13 weeks.

Up to 80% of people don't have any periods on the Depo.

Bye to heavy and or painful bleeding.

People can self-inject the medication at home (using a self-injectable form called Sayana Press available from some GUM and GP clinics).

# The Femidom



# The Rarely Used

## The bad?



Some people can gain significant amounts of weight.  
Periods may become erratic in some people.

It can take up to a year for your fertility to go back to normal after your last injection.

If you forget or are unable to get an appointment for your next injection, you can get pregnant.

# Contraception Injection



# The Depo

# The External Condom



## Old Faithful

### The External Condom



98% BUT that's with perfect use. It's usually 82% because, you know well, condom accidents.

Thin latex or non-latex put over an ERECT (sounds obvious but sadly it isn't always & it leads to unnecessary accidents) penis.

Stops the swimming sperm getting up into the womb/uterus

### The good?



Protects you against some sexually transmitted infections.

Few side effects, although some people find latex irritates their skin and need a latex free variety.

No hormones.

Most are spermicide free.

### The bad?

They split, they slip and sometimes they kill the vibe. They should not be used with anything containing an oil (e.g. moisturiser, Vaseline) as this makes them more likely to burst.

Need to withdraw the penis from the vagina before it goes soft or there can be spillage.



"I don't have regular partners, it's the best way to protect myself."



### What method?

The External Condom  
How and why do you use contraception?  
To stop STI transmission and prevent pregnancy.

### What is your experience of contraception?

Using SKYN condoms has been great. I am allergic to latex so they are much more comfortable. The sex I have is usually random and I don't have regular partners so it's the best way to protect myself. If I am having sex with people with vulvas we don't use protection and I get regularly tested.

## The bad?

Irregular bleeding or spotting, mainly in the first 3-6 months. Requires a pelvic examination and you need to have it fitted by a trained nurse or doctor. It can be painful for a few minutes when it is fitted.

Might not be suitable for some people with a history of gynaecological problems (ask your doctor or nurse). Can get an infection after the coil is fitted (uncommon). The coil can fall out. Some people say their partners can feel their threads - it's not painful and at least you'll know it's in place. The threads can be tucked out of the way or cut shorter to fix this.

Risk of ectopic pregnancy (when the pregnancy grows outside the womb) if the method fails.

## The good?

All of them give lighter, shorter bleeds. How light depends on the type of coil and your body's own response.

Many people have no periods at all.

Although it contains a hormone, only a very small amount of this is absorbed into the bloodstream and so most people do not have any hormonal side effects.



# The Intrauterine System (IUS)



## The Hormonal Coil

"I'd dread the 5 days every month where I'd spend hours doubled over on the toilet and would miss school, work and socials because of it."



### How and why do you use contraception?

For me, I suffered with really heavy and excruciatingly painful periods throughout my teens. I'd dread the 5 days every month where I'd spend hours doubled over on the toilet and would miss school, work and socials because of it. I went on the pill (Cerelle) at 16 and it changed my life - lighter, more regular periods and next-to-no pain which was MASSIVE for me. I felt like I could live my life normally again. The not-having-babies part was just an added bonus.

### What is your experience of using contraception?

Life-changing overall. There was an adjustment period where it affected my skin and I broke out for the first 3 months I was taking it. But the positives outweigh the negatives: lighter, more regular periods and little-to-no pain which was revolutionary to someone like me who would be doubled over in pain with a really bad period for 3-5 days of the month.

# Diaphragm & Spermicide



## The Cap

# Diaphragm & Spermicide

92% effective with spermicide. Usually 71% effective with typical use.

A bendy silicone cap that fits over the next of cervix (kind of like a moon-cup without the long bit to pull it out) to stop sperm swimming into the uterus.

## The good?

No serious side effects.  
No hormones.

## The bad?

Have to put it in before sex and reapply spermicide if you fancy another round. It needs to be left in for at least 6 hours after sex!

Spermicide sensitivity is a thing for some people.

You need the correct size.

"I felt like I couldn't be honest with previous employers about why I needed to have an appointment every 3 months."



## How and why do you use contraception?

To prevent pregnancy and reduce bleeding.

## What is your experience of contraception?

Mainly the implant works fine, I bleed for longer which is not an intended effect. I have used the contraception injection but going to the clinic every 3 months and trying to get time off work was difficult. Felt like I couldn't be honest with previous employers about why I needed to have an appointment every 3 months. So the implant saves me time. I still check the female box at the clinic sometimes depending on how vulnerable or assertive I'm feeling. If I can't be bothered to explain myself or think I will be questioned on my nonbinary identity, then it's easier to check female as I am feminine looking.

# The Implant



## Mini Yet Mighty

### The good?

Works for 3 years (yay!) but you can take it out sooner.

No pills to remember.

Fertility returns right after its removed.

### The bad?

1/3 have irregular bleeding, 1/3 have no periods, 1/3 have normal periods.

You have to wait for a few months to see how it will be.

You need to have it fitted by a trained nurse or doctor.

### How and why do you use contraception?

It gives me peace of mind and I know that I am being safe.

### What is your experience of contraception?

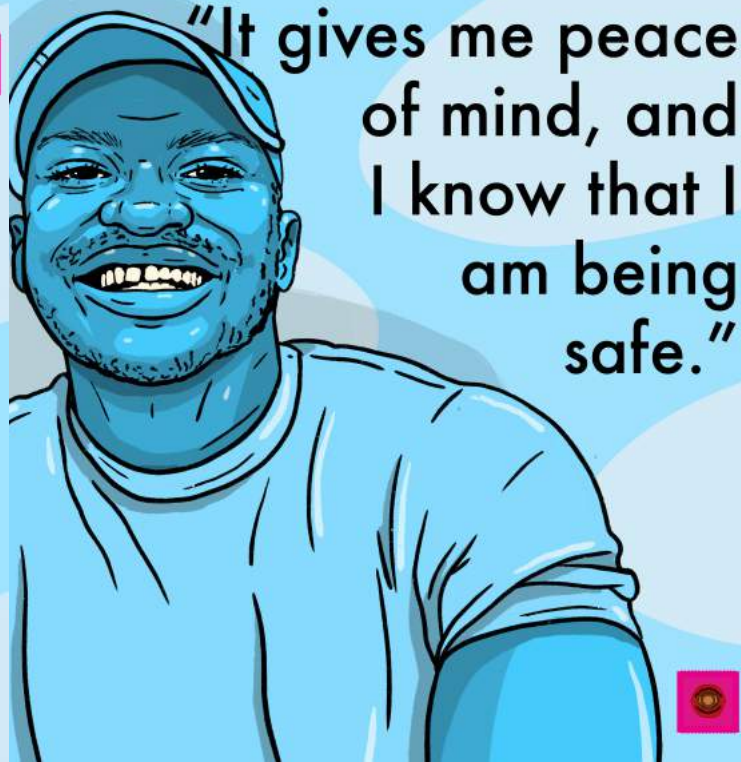
Condoms have been my primary method of contraception because they are reliable and convenient. In my experience, it tends to be my responsibility to provide them before engaging with a potential partner unless we talked about it before. I haven't met any partner who is averse to them on the first time we're meeting (that would be a red flag). Over time I have tried various brands to figure out what works best for me in terms of comfort, pleasure and satisfaction, I know which ones I like. I will go on to have the discussion about other forms of contraception that my partner may be on. As pleasurable as unprotected sex is, pregnancy is not the worst case scenario. That's where the conversation about sexual health checkups and the "when did you last get tested?" or "are you seeing anyone else" conversation happens. This establishes trust between my partner and I and also there's mutual accountability. So overall, condoms are the most accessible and low risk method for me.

## The Implant



99% Effective. Typical use is (gasp) 99% effective 'cos, well, you can't forget to take it!

A 4mm flexy rod that goes under the skin on the upper arm. Takes about 10minutes, you are given a local anaesthetic to numb the skin before it is fitted and bandage after (and if you're lucky maybe a chocolate bar). You can feel it if you press on your skin but it's not sore and nobody can see it. Progesterone hormone stops ovulation, thickens your cervical mucus and thins the lining of the womb.



"It gives me peace of mind, and I know that I am being safe."



# Progestogen-Only-Pill (POP)



## The good?

Unlike the combined pill which has restrictions, this pill is safe and suitable for almost everyone (yay!)

Periods are usually lighter or stop all together.

## The bad?

Need to take it at the same time every day.

Periods may be irregular .

Some people have side effects include breast tenderness, acne, weight gain and headaches.

It's easy to forget to take your pill and you usually only have 12 hour window to remember to take your pill (some only have a 3 hour window!)

# Combined Contraceptive Pill\* (COC)



## Combined Contraceptive Pill (COC)

Over 99% effective if used correctly.

Typical use 91% relies on you remembering to take your pill, change your patch or ring. Pills need to be taken every day, patches are changed once per week and the ring needs to be replaced each month.

Oestrogen and progestogen hormone work by stopping ovulation, thickening your cervical mucus to prevent sperm reaching an egg and thinning the lining of the womb.

## How and why do you use contraception?

I have used the estrogen-progesterone combination pill for a little over a year. My cycles have been irregular and extremely heavy since I started menstruation in middle school. For the longest time my mother put my symptoms off as something I would eventually grow out of. When I was about 16 I started experiencing very painful and itchy acne all over my face, back and chest. I didn't want to leave the house because I was so embarrassed. After the dermatologists efforts of topicals failed I decided to go to the gynecologist to seek out a hormonal option for these symptoms. She prescribed me with the Pill and I've been using it ever since.

\*Same hormone also available as weekly skin patch or monthly vaginal ring

## The good?

You are in control and decide when to take your pill/change your patch or ring.

Usually regulates your periods and makes them shorter and lighter.

Can also be used as a treatment for acne or facial hair, or to help with heavy or painful periods.

You can choose to have a bleed once a month or less often (you are in control of your periods!)



## The bad?

Some medical conditions (e.g. certain types of migraine, heart problems, blood disorders) or lifestyle factors (such as obesity or smoking if you are older than 34) may make the combined methods unsuitable.

Being on combined contraception causes a very small increased risk of blood clots, breast and cervical cancer (but also reduces the risk of ovarian, endometrial and bowel cancer).

Some people may experience headaches, nausea, mood changes and breast tenderness. It's easy to forget to take your pill or change your ring/patch. Vomiting may make pills ineffective. Their effectiveness can also be affected by other medicines.



"For the longest time my mother put my symptoms off as something I would eventually grow out of."



## What is your experience of using contraception?

Everyone told me that getting on the pill was a huge risk in my teen years. They told me I would gain weight, my acne would get worse, I would get pregnant anyways, I would get extremely moody or depressed and or that I would be infertile later in life. So far the pill has only changed my life for the better. My cycles have regulated themselves to the day and hour, my acne is gone and my Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) symptoms have gone away. The peace of mind that comes with taking a contraceptive to prevent pregnancy is also helpful. I think there is a lot of misinformation about contraception in general, but especially female birth control methods. I've had a great experience despite what all of my friends and family told me, but I guess it's different for everyone. At the end of the day it's a decision to be made with your doctor about YOUR body.



# The Intrauterine Device (IUD)



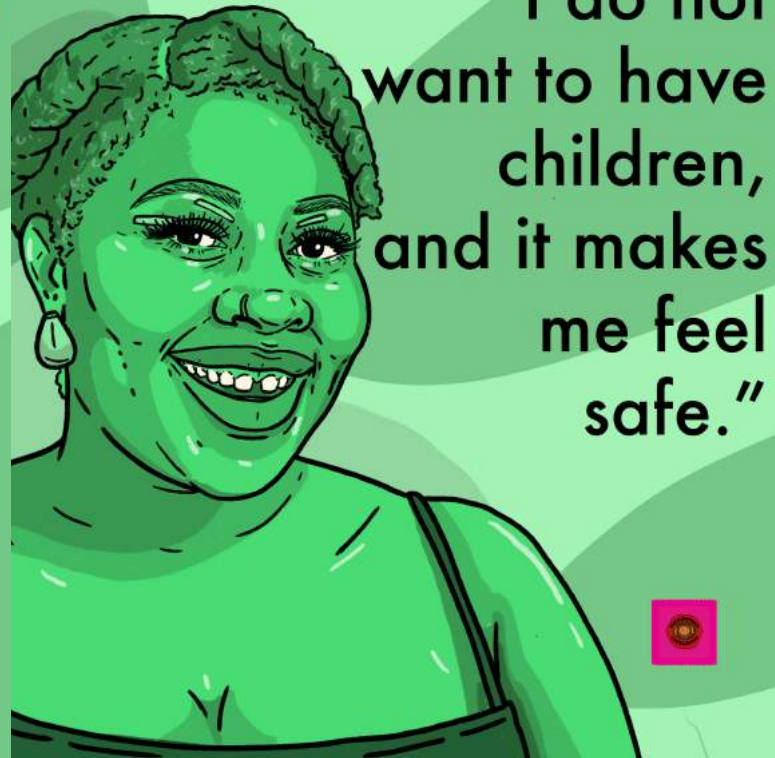
## The Copper Coil - The 'No-Hormone' Coil

### The Intrauterine Device (IUD)

99% Effective. Typical use is (gasp) 99% effective 'cos well you can't forget to take it!

A small plastic, T-shaped device with copper on the body +/- on the arms. Copper is toxic to sperm and stops a fertilised egg implanting in the womb.

Works for 5 or 10 years.



"I do not want to have children, and it makes me feel safe."

### The good?

Hormone free.

Also can be used as an emergency contraception at the right time of the cycle - see your doctor or nurse as soon as possible after unprotected sex to see if it is suitable.

### The bad?

Periods can be heavier, longer and/or more painful.

Requires a pelvic examination and you need to have it fitted by a trained nurse or doctor. It can be painful for a few minutes when it is fitted.

### How and why do you use contraception?

I use contraception because I do not want to have children and it makes me feel safe. Condoms break so knowing I have the coil as backup gives me peace of mind.

### What is your experience of using this method (s) of contraception?

I have used the Mirena coil for 3 years and I have had no other side effects except for no periods for the duration it was in. I like that once it's in, you don't have to remember to take any pills, all you have to do is check the strings to see if it's still in place.

# Natural Family Planning



## Natural Family Planning

99% effective with perfect use. 76% effective with typical use.

The fertile window within the menstrual cycle is mapped using a combination of calendars, body temperature and cervical mucus testing. This indicates when you can have sex safely without worrying about pregnancy.

## Keeping Things Natural

### The good?

Feel empowered to learn about your own menstrual cycle.  
Increasing number of apps to help (unproven effectiveness).  
No side effects.

### The bad?

If you have irregular cycles then less likely this method will be successful.  
It will take at least 3 cycles (using no contraception or other hormones) to work out a pattern.  
You must keep an accurate diary and remember to take your temperature every morning before you get up.  
Taking your body temperature can be affected by illness, alcohol and other things.

"To alleviate symptoms of polycystic ovary syndrome and to provide protection during sex."



## How and why do you use contraception?

To alleviate symptoms of Polycystic Ovaries Syndrome (PCOS) and to prevent pregnancy.

## What is your experience of using contraception?

I've had mostly positive experiences. The pill regulates my periods but causes weight gain due to appetite changes (the pill doesn't actually make you gain weight). I've just come off the pill to cleanse my body of artificial hormones and I am now using the copper coil. So far it hasn't been the best due to the side effects - everyone will have side effects until the contraceptive settles within the body. Once mine settled, I didn't have a problem with the IUD. I would say that my case is extremely lucky as I've been under the care of a gynaecologist for 3 years.

# Sterilisation



# Vasectomy

Much more effective than the other form of sterilisation with a failure rate of 1 in 2000.

The tubes that carry sperm from the testicles to the penis are tied or cut.

## The good?

No more contraception

Quick under local anesthetic (you stay awake, just need an injection to numb the skin).



## The bad?

Need to have a test after to check that there are no sperm present in semen – it can take a few months before you get the 'all clear'.

Not reversible – you need to be certain!

Doctors are reluctant to perform on younger patients they feel may change their mind.

Some people experience long-term pain after the procedure.



"I'm uninterested in having children."

## How and why do you use contraception?

I'm uninterested in having children.

What is your experience of getting a vasectomy of contraception? After a painful first week following the procedure, it's been smooth sailing since.

# Sterilisation

## Fallopian tube cutting or clips



Often considered the final solution to contraception but actually less effective than some of the methods above with 1 in 200 failing.

This is considered a permanent method for people who do not want any more children.

Stops the egg and sperm meeting.

### The good?

No more contraception  
Periods are not affected

### The bad?

Small risk of operation complications.  
You need to have a general anaesthetic and be asleep for the procedure – this won't be suitable for some people with health problems, or people who are obese.  
Risk of ectopic pregnancy (when the pregnancy grows outside the womb) if the method fails.  
Not reversible – you need to be certain!  
Doctors are reluctant to perform on younger patients they feel may change their mind.

### The bad?

Might not be suitable for some people with a history of gynaecological problems (ask your doctor or nurse).

Can get an infection after the coil is fitted (uncommon).  
The coil can fall out.

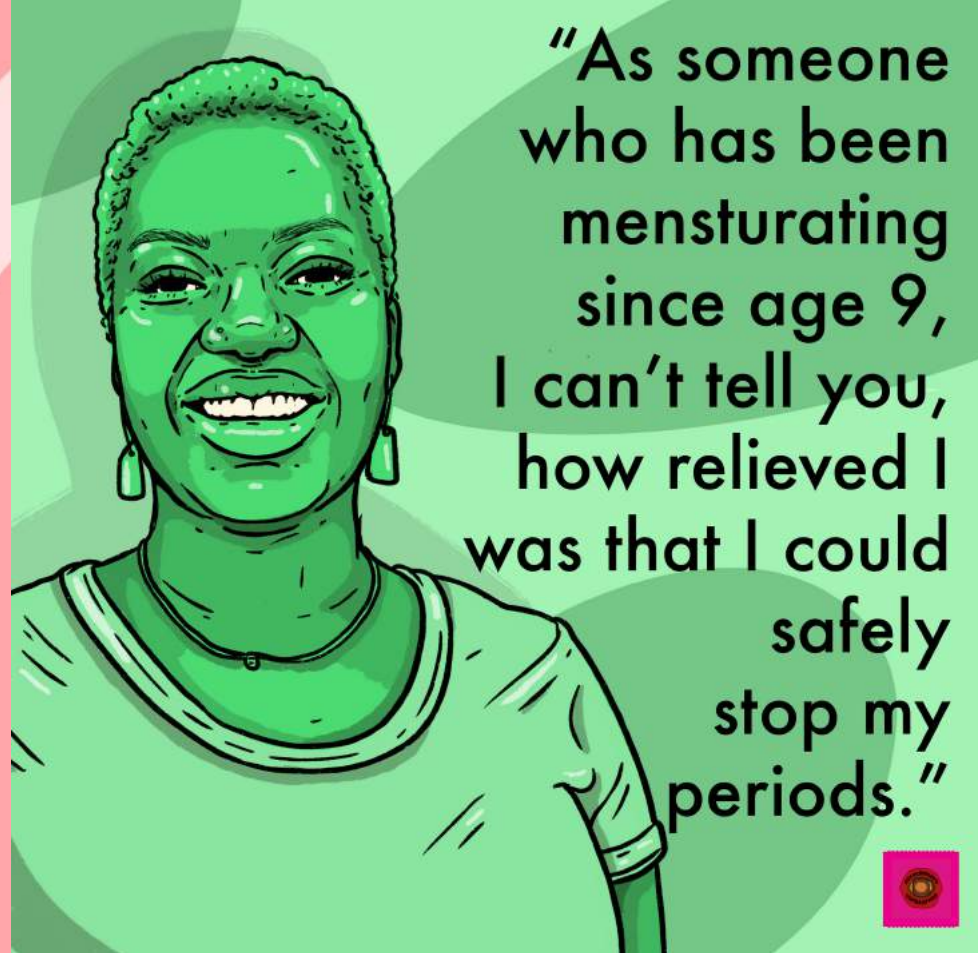
Some people say their partners can feel their threads – it's not painful and at least you'll know it's in place. The threads can be tucked out the way or cut shorter to fix this.

Risk of ectopic pregnancy (when the pregnancy grows outside the womb) if the method fails.



## What is your experience of using contraception?

Condoms are only effective as their user, so if I don't have another method that I am using, I tend to be super vigilant of my partners using it correctly. The pill is straightforward enough, although the only thing is that you can forget to take it and then deal with the stress of procuring the morning after pill. The implant for me was probably my worst contraception experience, the non-stop bleeding and cramps. The depo is a total winner for me, it is the one I have used the most, however weight gain as one of its side effects is something I have had to keep an eye on due to my own struggles with my weight. I have also had to deal with partners' concern about my lack of periods, I mean of all the things they should be pressed about. In the last year I have come to love the depo even more with the introduction of Sayana Press, which is the self injectable brand of the depo. This means instead of 4 visits a year to be injected, after observation whilst I self inject in the clinic, I have the option of a year's supply initially then two years supply. I can literally just get on with my life!



"As someone who has been menstruating since age 9, I can't tell you, how relieved I was that I could safely stop my periods."

## How and why do you use contraception?

When I was younger I used the combined pill to prevent pregnancy and partners used the condoms. When I began living independently at around 18, I learnt of the contraceptive injection (depo) and not only did it provide me effective contraception, it stopped my periods. As someone who has been menstruating since age 9, I can't tell you, how relieved I was that I could safely stop my periods.

## How and why do you use contraception?

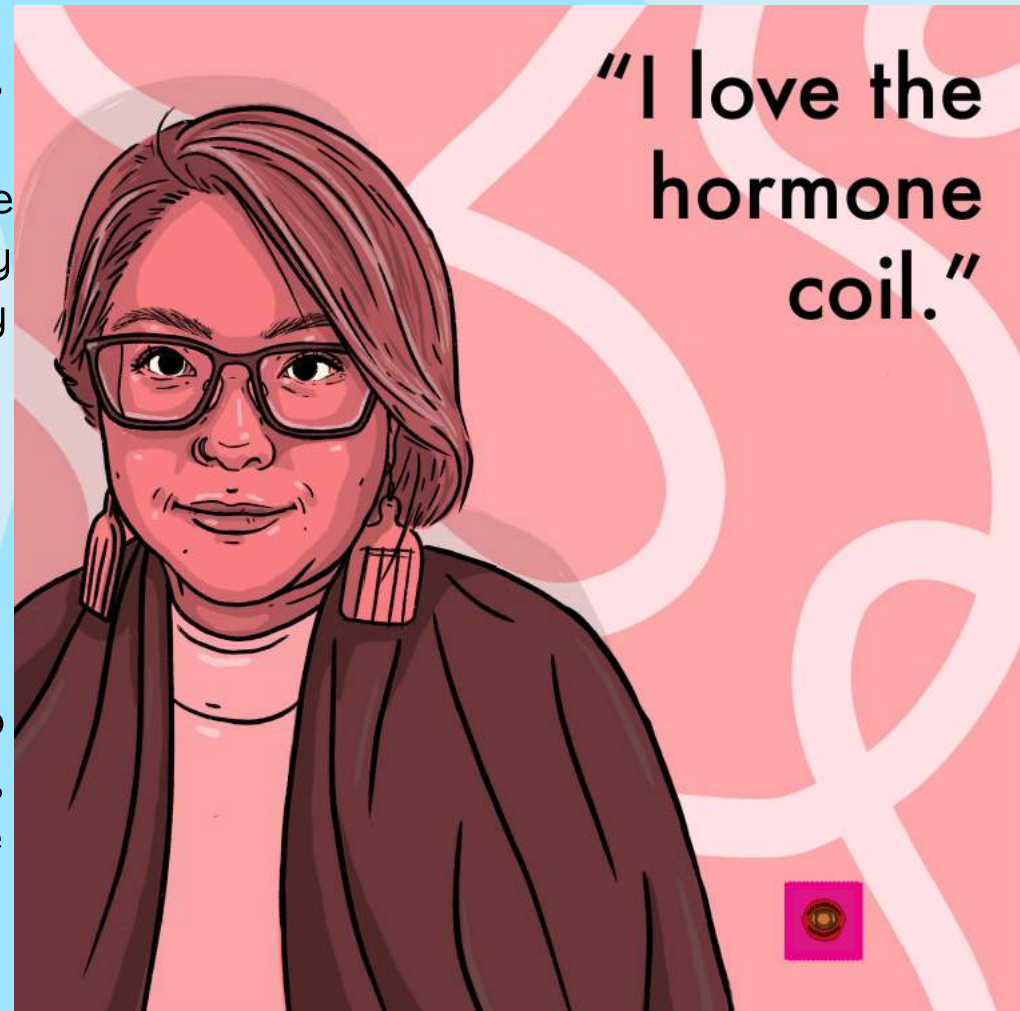
To prevent pregnancy, to be able to live period-free and to take control over my body and my life.

## What is your experience of using contraception?

I love the hormone coil for revolutionising my life. I was inspired by friends during my Masters - incredible people who had worked in places around the world, who loved their LARCs (long-acting reversible contraception) which gave them freedom and autonomy.

I got my first hormone coil fitted when I was 24 - and happily have not had a period in the 6 years since - which is absolutely medically fine! I love the peace of mind that comes with using a highly-effective method (>99% effective - as close to perfect as can be!). My coil does not rely on my partner's technique, nor my own ability to remember a daily pill - it takes human error out of the equation.

Having grown up in Canada and the UK, the combined oral contraceptive pill (aka "the pill") was the norm for young people. In my 20s, I grew increasingly frustrated with constantly having to renew my prescription, often running out of pills during busy exam times and feeling vulnerable to the risk of pregnancy (and having to revisit our good friend, condoms!). With the hormone coil, I can relax and live my life without worry of unplanned pregnancies or unplanned periods.



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