

## Contraception and the Menopause FAQs

### Where can I find out more about the methods of contraception ?

The Family Planning Association (FPA) charity developed excellent leaflets and resources about all methods available in the UK. The FPA went into liquidation in May 2019 but fortunately their Sexwise website is now run by Public Health England <https://sexwise.fpa.org.uk/contraception>.

Information about all the methods can also be found on the website of Derbyshire Sexual Health Service <https://www.yoursexualhealthmatters.org.uk> . Consultations with a contraception expert can be booked either online or by telephoning 08003283383.

### When can I stop using contraception?

This depends upon whether you are using a contraceptive **method without hormones** e.g. condom, diaphragm or cap, copper coil, or whether you are using a **method with hormones** in it e.g. the pill, implant, injection, hormone coil.

If you are taking a **method without hormones** you can stop using it two years after your last period if your last period happens when you are under age 50 and one year after your last period if your last period happens when you are aged 50 or above.

If you are taking a **method with hormones**, then it is advised to continue taking it until you are aged 55. At age 55 the risk of pregnancy is exceptionally rare, so it is safe to stop contraception even in the unlikely event you are still having periods.

### Do I need a blood test?

**Generally, not.**

They are only useful in younger women who experience premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) under the age of 40 or women who experience an early menopause under the age of 45. These women should have at least two FSH levels of 30 IU/L or more taken 4 to 6 weeks apart (and not on a combined hormonal method of contraception) to confirm the diagnosis of POI or early menopause.

If women aged over 50 who are taking a hormonal method of contraception don't like the idea of taking it until aged 55 then they could have an FSH level taken. If it is over 30 IU/L the menopause can be assumed at that point and they just need to continue the method for one more year.

## Can I use any method of contraception after age 50?

Most methods can safely be used after the age of 50, however there are a few **exceptions**:

If on *Combined Hormonal Contraception* (oestrogen containing contraceptive pill, patch or ring), you must change to a non-oestrogen containing contraceptive method at age 50 even if you are a fit healthy non-smoker. This is because the small risk of cardiovascular disease and thrombosis (blood clots) increase because these medical conditions become more common after the age of 50.

If on an *injectable method of contraception*, it's advisable to change to another progestogen only or non-hormonal method because there are safer methods that are equally as effective.

*Natural Family Planning / fertility awareness* methods become unreliable when approaching the menopause because ovulation and cycle length become erratic.

## Is HRT Contraceptive?

HRT is NOT generally contraceptive.

There is however one type of HRT that is contraceptive which is when the Mirena hormone coil is used as the progestogen half of HRT alongside estrogen HRT (see our leaflet on HRT). The Mirena used in this way needs to be changed every 5 years.

Younger women who experience POI under the age of 40 often use a combined hormonal method of contraception (if they are healthy non-smokers) because it is not just contraceptive but also provides the same benefits of HRT on bones and symptoms if it is taken continuously without the usual 7 day break after each 21 day cycle of use.

## Can I take HRT and Contraception at the same time ?

If a woman is using the progestogen only pill, the implant or injectable then HRT can be taken alongside these methods.