

# Contraception

**Contraception or birth control helps prevent pregnancy.** It can stop pregnancy from happening in a couple of ways. Oral birth control pills, the Depo-Provera shot, an intrauterine device (IUD), or condoms are all good choices for people with sickle cell disease.

## Why do people with sickle cell disease need birth control?

Women with sickle cell disease can become pregnant, and men with sickle cell disease can father babies.

Until you are ready for a pregnancy, you need birth control! If you are thinking about having a child, it is best to talk with your healthcare provider first.

## What type of birth control is best?

Abstinence, which is **not having sex**, is the safest and most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The best type of birth control for you depends on your needs. Progestin-only mini-pills (a type of birth control pill), an IUD, and shots are good choices for women who have sickle cell disease.

## REMEMBER

Birth control prevents pregnancy, but only abstinence or condoms prevent sexually transmitted diseases! Even if you are using birth control, you **STILL** need condoms to prevent STDs.

## What are some benefits of birth control?

- Women with sickle cell disease may have fewer problems from their disease when using the birth control shot or pills.
- For some women, the shot or an IUD helps control their periods without needing to remember a daily pill.
- The birth control shot, such as Depo-Provera, is effective for 12 to 13 weeks.

## What are some possible side effects?

- Most side effects of the progestin-only birth control methods go away after the first few months of use.
- Irregular periods, spotting or bleeding between periods, or no periods at all (more common with the shot or the progestin-containing IUD).
- Sore breasts
- Headache, nausea, or dizziness
- Bloating or weight gain, especially with the birth control shot
- Use of the shot for 2 or more years can cause bone loss. The bone loss may not be fully reversible after stopping the medicine.

## Have any questions?

Please talk to your sickle cell medical provider or your regular doctor.

