

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and sexual and reproductive health in young people

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) includes preventing pregnancy, preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and having respectful relationships.

As a young person if you are sexually active, you are at increased risk of STIs compared to older people, and more likely to become pregnant. Early diagnosis and treatment of STIs can reduce the risk of long-term problems. If you are sexually active, it is important you use condoms to reduce your STI risk. Do this in addition to using reliable contraception to reduce pregnancy. In Australia, it is recommended that all people less than 30 years have a regular test for STIs. This may be a urine or self-collected swab test. This is important because most STIs do not cause symptoms.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)





People with IBD have a similar risk of STIs to people without IBD. The exception is those receiving anal sex, who may be at increased risk if they have anal IBD.



Contraception and IBD

People with IBD can become pregnant, however pregnancy carries increased risk compared to pregnancy in people without IBD. Some factors related to IBD or your medications may influence the best choice of contraception for you.

The table below outlines some reasons why certain contraception may not be best for people with IBD. But it is important to talk to your healthcare team about what contraception options are available for you.

Note: no matter which contraception you use, condoms should also be used to protect against STIs

Method	Key facts for IBD
Implant [Implanon] 	Safe and effective to use
Intrauterine system [Mirena] 	Safe and effective to use
Intrauterine device (copper IUD) 	Safe and effective to use.
Combined estrogen-progesterone tablets ("the pill": COCP) or vaginal ring [Nuvaring] 	Can be used however if you have any of the following, other methods list above are preferred; <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Severe liver disease- Malabsorption (including multiple small bowel resections)- Pancreatic insufficiency- Port-a-cath

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At risk of blood clots including major surgery or being immobile for long periods - Certain medications e.g., mycophenolate, rifampicin
Depot provera injections 	Generally, not recommended in IBD as it can cause reduction in bone mineral density (increasing the risk of osteoporosis). People with IBD already have additional risk factors for low bone mineral density and therefore it is important to avoid further risk. If you would really prefer this choice, it is important you have a discussion with your doctor about the benefits and risks for you.
Condoms Best method for preventing STIs. Should be used with more reliable contraception	Important to use to prevent the risk of STIs. Not recommended for contraception in people with IBD given pregnancy carries increased risks, especially if unplanned and active disease.
Withdrawal methods 	Not recommended in people with IBD given pregnancy carries increased risks, especially if unplanned and active disease. Best to use more reliable contraception.
Emergency contraception Use if unplanned unprotected intercourse, however best not to use as regular reliable contraception	Not recommended in people with IBD given pregnancy carries increased risks, especially if unplanned and active disease. Best to use more reliable contraception.

Cervical screening tests and IBD

The cervical screening test (CST), previously known as the “Pap smear,” is a test that checks the health of your cervix. It detects the human papilloma virus (HPV). If you have certain subtypes of HPV, over many years these can cause abnormal cells of the cervix and uncommonly cause cancer.

In Australia, it is recommended that anyone with a cervix has a 5 yearly CST, beginning at age 25. If you are on immunosuppressant therapy for management of your IBD, you may require screening every 3 years. When you turn 25yrs, it is recommended that you discuss this with your doctor.

The best way to reduce your chance of HPV infection is by ensuring you have had your HPV vaccine. This is part of the National Immunisation Schedule and is given to female and males around 12-13 years. Using condoms when you have sex can also reduce your risk of HPV.

Pregnancy and IBD

Fertility:

- Fertility is the ability for you, or your partner, to become pregnant.
- People with well controlled IBD have the same fertility compared to others your age without IBD. However, IBD can cause reduced fertility if you have active disease, or if you are taking

certain medications. For example, males may have reduced fertility when then taking methotrexate or sulfasalazine, which returns to normal when they stop the medication.

Pregnancy:

- Pregnancy outcomes are best if the pregnancy is planned so your health can be optimised before you become pregnant. Ideally this means your IBD is well controlled and without recent flares, and that you are on medications that are safe to use in pregnancy. People with IBD can experience flares in pregnancy however these are less likely if you have good control before becoming pregnant. It is very important that if you are sexually active and do not plan to be pregnant right now, that you discuss with your doctor about the most reliable contraception for you.

Pregnancy and medications:

- Some medications taken for IBD are 'teratogenic.' This means that if you fall pregnant whilst taking these medications, it can cause problems for you or the fetus. Your doctors will chat to you if any of your medications are teratogenic and if they are, it is very important that you speak to your doctor about reliable contraception whilst using these medications.

Key points to remember

Anyone who is sexually active, who intends to become sexually active, should take steps to reduce risk of STIs and unintended pregnancy.

Condoms are the most effective way of preventing STIs, and should always be used. All people less than 30 years of age should have an annual screen for STIs. Prompt diagnosis and treatment can prevent complications.

In IBD, intrauterine devices or Implanon are the safest and most effective way to prevent pregnancies. It is important that you talk to your healthcare team about the best option for you.

For more information

Contraception in general

- Melbourne sexual health clinic: <https://www.mshc.org.au/>
- Family planning Victoria: <https://shvic.org.au/>
- Shine SA: <https://shinesa.org.au/>
- The Royal Women's Hospital: <https://www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/contraception/your-contraception-choices>
- Cervical screening tests: <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/early-detection-and-screening/cervical-cancer-screening>

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