

Medical Conditions That Make Pregnancy Especially Risky

Some common medical conditions make pregnancy riskier to a woman's health. The effectiveness of her contraceptive method thus has special importance. For a comparison of the effectiveness of family planning methods, see *Contraceptive Effectiveness*, p. 319.

Some methods depend more on their users for effectiveness than do others. Mostly, the methods that require correct use with every act of sex or abstaining during fertile days are the less effective methods, as commonly used:

- Spermicides
- Withdrawal
- Fertility awareness methods
- Cervical caps
- Diaphragms
- Female condoms
- Male condoms

If a woman says that she has any of the common conditions listed below:

- She should be told that pregnancy could be especially risky to her health and in some cases, to the health of her baby.
- During counseling, focus special attention on the effectiveness of methods. Clients who are considering a method that requires correct use with every act of sex should think carefully whether they can use it effectively.

Reproductive Tract Infections and Disorders

- Breast cancer
- Endometrial cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Some sexually transmitted infections (gonorrhea, chlamydia)
- Some vaginal infections (bacterial vaginosis)

Cardiovascular Disease

- High blood pressure (systolic blood pressure higher than 160 mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure higher than 100 mm Hg)
- Complicated valvular heart disease
- Ischemic heart disease (heart disease due to narrowed arteries)
- Stroke

Other Infections

- HIV/AIDS (see Sexually Transmitted Infections Including HIV, Question 9, p. 287)
- Tuberculosis
- Schistosomiasis with fibrosis of the liver

Endocrine Conditions

- Diabetes if insulin dependent, with damage to arteries, kidneys, eyes, or nervous system (nephropathy, retinopathy, neuropathy), or of more than 20 years' duration

Anemia

- Sickle cell disease

Gastrointestinal Conditions

- Severe (decompensated) cirrhosis of the liver
- Malignant (cancerous) liver tumors (hepatoma)