How Contraception Works: Mechanisms of Action

All contraceptives prevent fertilization of the egg by the sperm

Prevents Ovulation
- Hormonal Contraceptives (Combined)
  - Combined Oral Contraceptives (COCs)
  - Emergency Contraceptive Pills
  - Combined Hormonal Vaginal Rings
- Hormonal Contraceptives (Progestin-only)*
  - Implants
  - Injectables
  - Progestin-only Pills (POPs)
  - Progestin-only Vaginal Rings
- Lactation Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

Thickens Cervical Mucus
- Hormonal Contraceptives (Progestin-only)*
  - Hormonal IUDs
  - Implants
  - Injectables
  - Progestin-only Pills (POPs)
  - Progestin-only Vaginal Rings

Blocks Sperm
- Male Condoms
- Female Condoms

Incapacitates Sperm
- Copper IUD †

* Progestin-only hormonal methods have more than one mechanism of action.
† The Copper IUD works by preventing fertilization but in very rare instances, if used as Emergency Contraception, it may prevent implantation of a fertilized egg.

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