

GYNAECOLOGY & OBSTETRICS UPDATE

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Contraception for Women Aged Over 40 Years

Part III: When to stop?

In general, contraception may be stopped at the age of 55 years. However, this advice may need to be tailored to the individual woman. Women who are not using hormonal contraception and who continue to have regular menstrual bleeding at the age of 55 years should continue with some form of contraception. Women who have been diagnosed with premature ovarian failure may occasionally have spontaneous return of ovarian activity and should be referred to a specialist for contraceptive guidance.

Contraceptive method	Advice on stopping contraception	
	Age <50 years	Age ≥50 years
Non-hormonal	Stop contraception after 2 years of amenorrhoea	Stop contraception after 1 year of amenorrhoea
CHC	Can be continued up to age 50 years ^a	Stop CHC at age 50 years and switch to a non-hormonal or progestogen-only method, then follow appropriate advice
DMPA	Can be continued up to age 50 years ^a	Stop DMPA at age 50 years and choose from options below: Switch to a non-hormonal method and stop after 2 years of amenorrhoea OR Switch to the POP, implant or LNG-IUS and follow advice below
Implant POP LNG-IUS	Can be continued to age 50 years or longer ^a	Continue method If amenorrhoeic either check FSH levels and stop method after 1 year if serum FSH is ≥30 IU/L on two occasions 6 weeks apart OR Stop at age 55 years when natural loss of fertility can be assumed for most women If not amenorrhoeic, consider investigating any abnormal bleeding or changes in bleeding pattern, and continue contraception beyond age 55 years until amenorrhoeic for 1 year

^aIf a woman wishes to stop hormonal contraception before age 50 years she should be advised to switch to a non-hormonal method and to stop once she has been amenorrhoeic for 2 years (or 3 years if switched from DMPA due to the potential delay in return of ovulation).

CHC, combined hormonal contraception; DMPA, depot medroxyprogesterone acetate; FSH, follicle-stimulating hormone; IU, international unit; LNG-IUS, levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system; POP, progestogen-only pill.

Reference: Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare Clinical Guidance **July 2010**

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