

HEALTH MATTERS

Withdrawal (Pulling Out)

What is withdrawal?

Withdrawal is a form of birth control that some people call “pulling out.” When this method is used, the man pulls his penis out of his partner’s vagina before sperm comes out (ejaculation or cumming).

How effective is withdrawal?

Withdrawal is about as effective as using male condoms. It only works if no semen gets into the woman’s vagina. If withdrawal is always used perfectly, 4 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year. If withdrawal is not used perfectly every time, 18 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year.

How does it work?

Withdrawal keeps sperm from entering the vagina during sex. This prevents sperm from reaching an egg.

- The man must know when he is about to ejaculate.
- He pulls his penis out of his partner’s vagina before any semen comes out.
- Then, he moves his penis away from his partner’s vagina to make sure sperm does not get in or near it.

Sometimes semen gets into the woman’s vagina by accident. If you are concerned that this may have happened, take emergency contraception as soon as possible within five days.

What are the benefits of using withdrawal?

- Withdrawal is free and always available.

What are the downsides of using withdrawal?

- Withdrawal does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- You must use withdrawal each time you have sex.
- Withdrawal is less effective than some other birth control methods.
- The male partner must be willing and able to pull out. He needs to know when semen is about to come out and withdraw before it does.
- Some people find that withdrawal lessens sexual pleasure.
- Both men and women may feel frustrated or anxious using this method.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on withdrawal, talk to your health care provider.

Compare withdrawal to other birth control options using ARHP’s Method Match at www.arhp.org/MethodMatch.