

Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)



What is LAM?

LAM is a type of birth control that uses the hormones your body makes while breastfeeding to help prevent pregnancy. Breastfeeding (*lactation*) hormones send a signal to your ovaries to stop releasing eggs and stop having periods (*amenorrhea*). If you don't release an egg, you can't get pregnant.

How well does LAM work?

- With perfect use (you have all 3 requirements) LAM is **98%** effective against pregnancy for the first 6 months after giving birth.
- You can get pregnant as soon as one month after having a baby when not using LAM or another method of birth control.
- LAM does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.

When can I use LAM as birth control?

It's still possible to get pregnant while breastfeeding. To use LAM, you must have **all 3** of these requirements:

- It must be less than 6 months since you gave birth **and**
- You are fully breastfeeding your baby (baby gets no other liquids or food) or nearly-fully breastfeeding your baby (baby gets occasional vitamins, water, or other liquids that do not lower the number of feedings) both day and night **and**
- Your period has not returned. This means you have not had vaginal bleeding for 2 or more days in a row (not including post-partum bleeding during the first 6 weeks after giving birth).

After pregnancy, your body will release an egg (ovulate) *before* your period returns. This is why it's important to make sure that you have *all 3* requirements for LAM to work.

Talk to your health care provider to see if LAM is right for you.

How do I use LAM?

You can start using LAM right after giving birth. For LAM to work, the time between feeds shouldn't be more than 4 hours in the day, or 6 hours at night. Ask your health care provider for information about breastfeeding and find resources and support at www.HealthyParentsHealthyChildren.ca.

LAM may be less effective at preventing pregnancy if you pump or if your baby uses a pacifier. This is because the hormones that prevent pregnancy are released when your baby sucks on your nipples.

Be prepared to switch to another type of birth control (e.g., condoms, birth control pills) in case you no longer have all 3 requirements for LAM, like if your baby has decreased the number or frequency of feeds or if you got your period.

Think about getting **emergency contraception** as soon as possible if you don't have all 3 requirements for LAM and you've had vaginal sex without using another type of birth control. Do a pregnancy test if you have symptoms of pregnancy (e.g., sore breasts, nausea) or think you might be pregnant.

What are the benefits of LAM?

- There is no cost and no birth control supplies are needed.
- It's effective right away after giving birth.
- It doesn't require medications that can affect your milk.
- Breastfeeding and human milk have many other benefits for you and your baby.

What are the disadvantages of LAM?

- Fully or nearly-fully breastfeeding may be hard or not recommended for some people.
- It's only effective for up to 6 months after giving birth.
- Fertility can return quickly if breastfeeding is reduced.

Did You Know?

- You have the right to decide to have sex or not. Talk with your partner(s) about consent.
- There's an 85% chance of becoming pregnant within one year if no birth control is used for vaginal sex.
- Use a condom every time you have sex (oral, vaginal, anal). Condoms help prevent pregnancy, STIs and HIV.
- You can lower your risk of HIV by taking an HIV prevention pill every day. Many Albertans can get it for free. Visit www.prepalberta.ca to find out more.
- Transgender and gender diverse people who have a uterus can use hormonal birth control. It can help prevent pregnancy and make periods lighter and less painful.

Websites

- ahs.ca/srh
- ReadyOrNotAlberta.ca
- TeachingSexualHealth.ca
- myhealth.alberta.ca
- sexandu.ca

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.



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