

# Birth Control for Women with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

## What is contraception?

Contraception is a way to **prevent pregnancy** from happening. There are many types of contraception available, and this fact-sheet will focus on two kinds:

1. Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARC)
2. Moderately and Highly Effective Reversible Contraception

We did a research study in order to understand more about what kind of contraception women with intellectual and developmental disabilities were provided.

### Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives

LARCs are surgically inserted and last for a few years inside the body. A person who chooses a LARC does not need to take any other steps to prevent a pregnancy from happening. If a person decides to become pregnant the LARC can be removed.

### Moderately and Highly Effective Reversible Contraception

Some examples of these kinds of contraception include birth control pills, a patch, an injection, or a diaphragm. These types of contraception require different steps that a person needs to do over time. If a person decides to become pregnant, these steps can be stopped at any time.

**It is important to remember** that contraceptives prevent pregnancy **but do not prevent** diseases and infections during sexual activities. Additional protection against these types of sexual infections and diseases during sex is recommended.

## In this research study we learned that:

- **Women with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)** are **less likely** to get a LARC from their health care provider than **women without disabilities**.
- **Women with intellectual and developmental disabilities** are **less likely** to get a moderately and highly effective reversible contraception from their health provider than **women without these disabilities**.

# What are some possible reasons for this difference?

Lack of Information



Medical care providers are not trained on how to talk with women with intellectual and developmental disabilities about contraception.

Stigma & Stereotypes



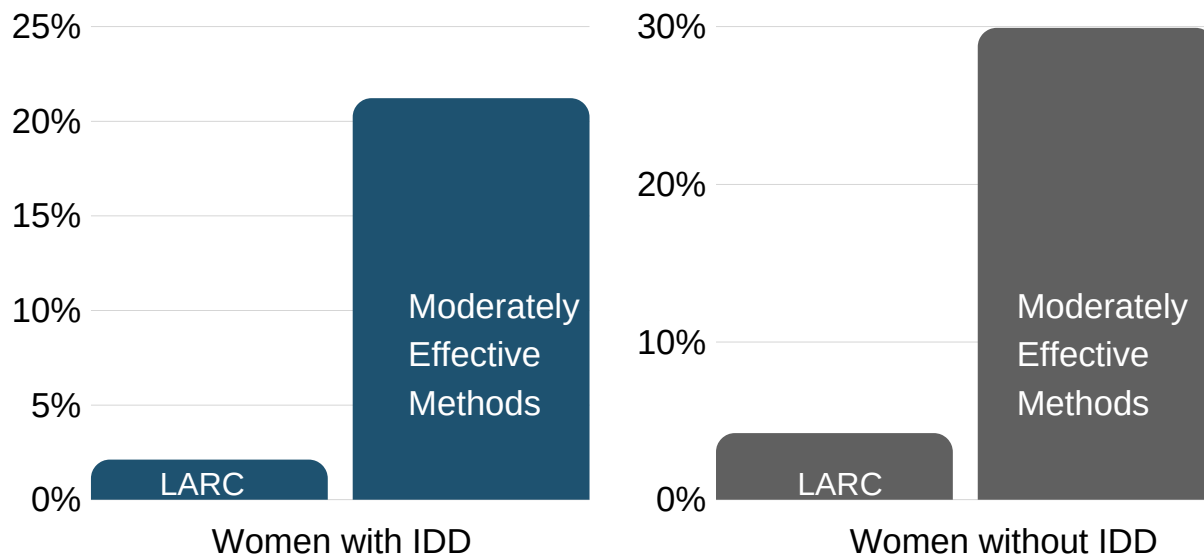
Some people believe that women with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not sexual, and do not need to prevent pregnancies.

Lack of Self-Directed Decisions



Sometimes women with intellectual and developmental disabilities should not be able to make their own health care choices.

Our research study used information about 915,561 women in Massachusetts between the ages of 15 - 44, of these 13,059 women had at least one IDD. **This study found that women without IDD are twice as likely to be provided contraception than women with these disabilities.**



Adapted from: Wu J., Zhang J., Mitra M., Parish S., Kavya M., Reddy G. (2018). Provision of Moderately and Highly Effective Reversible Contraception to Insured Women With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. 132(3):565-574