

British Columbia's Contraception Coverage Significantly Reduces Patient Costs With Greatest Benefit for Youth

BEFORE POLICY IN BC

Before BC introduced free contraception coverage in April 2023, many people faced high out-of-pocket costs for birth control.



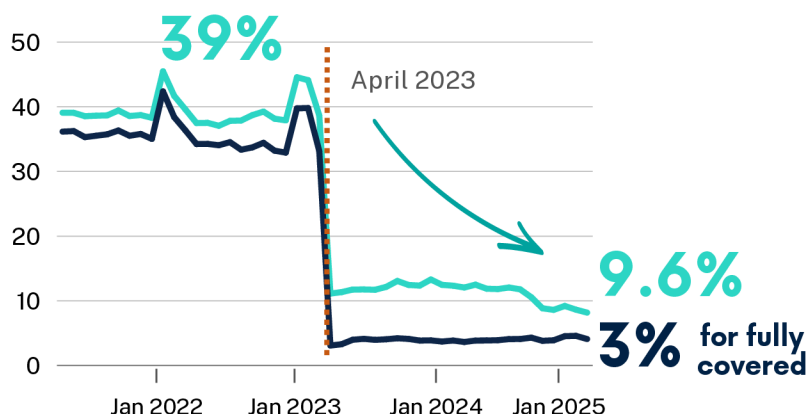
Out-of-pocket costs could be as high as \$500 for an IUD or \$25/month for pills.

Nearly 4 in 10 contraception prescriptions in BC were paid out-of-pocket by patients.

Young adults (20-29y) experienced the highest costs (avg \$74/yr).

KEY FINDINGS

Patient share of contraception cost decreased



Per user spending on average decreased by

-\$43/yr

Up to -\$65/yr for 20-29y

Overall patient spending

83% lower

> 99% for fully-covered

YOUNG ADULTS BENEFITTED MOST

- Patient costs fell to under **\$15/yr** by 2 years after policy (**\$9/yr** for on-formulary) for 20-29 year olds.
- Per user costs in 20-29 year olds fell by **-\$65/yr**.

POLICY WAS RESPONSIVE

- Adding new contraceptives to formulary **benefited users** and especially youth.
- Patients switched to generics, lowering overall health system spending.

TOTAL SPENDING LEVELS AT 2 YEARS

- Increased spending on IUDs and implants was offset by lower spending on pills. Overall contraceptive spending (all payers) was stable at 2y.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

BC's free contraception coverage policy sharply reduced patient out-of-pocket costs and was especially beneficial for young adults.

Link to full research paper:



Nethery et al.
JAMA Health Forum
2026