



By [Catherine Wieczorek](#), Visual Communications Designer, Ci3 Design Thinking Lab

How does Ci3's Design Thinking Lab (DTL) go from a prototype created during a participatory design workshop with young people, to a scalable communication tool? The idea of a tangible birth control counseling tool came directly from young people during our [2017 Summer Design Challenge](#), a series of participatory design workshops. Several groups of young people created prototypes that featured each birth control method as a 3D object so people could look and see how they felt, or learn that all of these methods existed. It also provided them with a better understanding of contraceptive methods' actual size. These rough prototypes led to our next stage of development: a more refined version that could be used by providers to teach young people about their options.



Original prototype created by young people during the Summer Design Challenge

In preparation for further development, the DTL team interviewed providers that work in health care settings, such as mobile health units and hospital clinics, to learn more about their current counseling practices and to receive feedback on the most recent iteration of the tangible birth control prototypes. During these interviews, providers described some of their challenges with contraceptive counseling. They explained that when it comes to the clinic appointment for birth control, there are frequently occurring barriers for both providers and patients. First, is that appointment times are often limited to only 15 minutes. Within this small amount of time, it can be very difficult to complete a comprehensive explanation of the methods available to the patient, especially since some of the birth control methods are more difficult to understand. There is also often limited time for myth-busting when a patient has heard things from friends and family that are medically inaccurate, such as "the Nexplanon could make your arm fall off."

Providers also discussed what they like about currently available counseling supports, typically tear sheets with pictures and basic facts. Providers noted that these tools were helpful because all of the methods were in one place and pictures helped young people understand each one. Even so, they preferred to share 3D models with patients to better illustrate how that method could fit into the patient's body. However, providers were excited to see our prototype because they knew it would be a great tool to inform patients on their birth control decision. One provider noted:

"If pictures are worth a thousand words, then this [tangible birth control tool] must be worth 10,000."

To move their idea forward, this past August, DTL partnered with two midwives from [UChicago Medicine's Midwifery Services](#), to host mock consultations focused on birth control counseling with prototypes of the tangible birth control tool. During the mock consultations, the UChicago midwives met with young people to have a private, 15-minute counseling session using the tool. Overall, young people felt the tool was

extremely helpful because it allowed them to see how each birth control method looked and felt. One of the participants said:

“Seeing the different types of birth control methods on a ring was eye opening for me because I didn’t know some of the things were actually that small. So it was pretty informative.”

In addition to their positive experiences, young people suggested adding color to make the tool more approachable. With the feedback from providers and young people, the DTL team is now in the process of taking the tangible birth control tool into the next phase of production.



A participant from the mock consultation looks through the Tangible Birth Control Kit to learn more about their contraceptive options.