

PILL FACTS

How the pill works:

- Each birth control pill contains a precisely controlled proportion of hormones.
- The pill prevents pregnancy in two ways.
 - a. It prevents ovulation, which means the ovary does not release an egg, and therefore cannot be fertilized by sperm.
 - b. The pill also causes your cervical mucous to become thick, making it difficult for sperm to enter your uterus.

How to take your pills:

- When taken properly, the pill is one of the most effective reversible ways to prevent pregnancy.
- To begin your pills you will follow either:
 - a. The Sunday start schedule: Take your first pill on the first Sunday after your period begins. If your period begins on Sunday, you take your first pill the same day.
 - b. The quick start schedule: After a negative pregnancy test, you will take your first pill that same day.

Your provider will determine the best start schedule for you.
- Continue taking one pill every day regardless of whether your flow has or has not ceased. You will probably have your period about every 28 days.
- Take your pill about the same time every day – select a time that's easy for you to remember – associate your pill taking with something else you do every day at a particular time – IE: bedtime or supper time. Setting an alarm on your phone may be helpful. For maximum contraceptive effectiveness, your pills should be taken at intervals of 24 hours. Missed or irregularly taken pills increase your chances that an ovary can release an egg and therefore you could become pregnant. Also, you could experience bleeding between your periods.
- For maximum protection against pregnancy, use an additional method of birth control during the first cycle of pills.
- Some medications affect the effectiveness of the pill, especially antibiotics. Discuss this possibility with the health care provider that is prescribing medicines for you. When in doubt, use a backup method of contraception for the remainder of your pill cycle.
- Episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhea can affect the absorption rate of the pill. If you experience these symptoms, use a backup method of contraception for the remainder of that cycle.

Side effects:

- Most of the common side effects of the pill are not serious. They can include nausea, vomiting, breast tenderness, weight gain and some irregular bleeding. These usually subside within three months. Many women find that their periods are more regular with lighter menstrual flow and less cramping.
- Spotting or Breakthrough bleeding (BTB): this is a common side effect. You need to continue taking your pills regularly. If the bleeding continues for several days, monitor the amount of bleeding. If bleeding is heavy enough to require a pad or tampon every 1-2 hours, contact the clinic. If BTB continues for three cycles, see your provider. BTB does not affect the effectiveness of the pill – if you are taking it correctly. You are still protected.

- Serious side effects occur very infrequently. These may include high blood pressure, stroke, blood clots and liver problems. Women who smoke are at greater risk.

Forgetting to Take Pills:

- If you miss one pill, take the forgotten pill as soon as you remember it and take the next pill on schedule.
- If you miss 2 pills in a row, take two pills as soon as you remember and two the next day. Ex: You forgot your pills on Saturday and Sunday evenings but remember Monday morning. Take two pills on Monday and two on Tuesday. You may have some spotting. Use another means of contraception until you finish the pack of pills.
- You miss 3 or more pills in a row. The chances are great that you have ovulated and you may get pregnant. You have two options – 1) Stop taking the pills from your old pack. Start a new pack of pills the Sunday after you missed three or more pills. Even if you are bleeding. Use a second method of birth control while you are off pills and for the first two weeks of your new pack. 2) Begin using a second method of contraception immediately. Throw your old pack of pills away. Wait until your next normal period and then begin a new cycle of pills.

Symptoms Which May Warn of Serious Trouble from the Pill

Five Danger Signs

- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
- Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)
- Severe headaches
- Eye symptoms: blurred vision, flashing lights, loss of vision

Do not ignore these symptoms or only hope that they will go away. If you have any of these symptoms, contact your provider immediately and explain your problem.

Reminders:

- The pill provides protection against pregnancy, it **DOES NOT** protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Use condoms to protect yourself from STIs.
- Keep an extra full pack of pills on hand so that you never run out of your pills.