

HOW TO TAKE BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

HOW THEY WORK: The major effect of the pill is to prevent ovulation, or release of an egg.

A. DIRECTIONS FOR TAKING THE PILLS

You may start taking your first pack of pills in any of the following ways:

1. On the first day you begin bleeding during your period.
2. On the first Sunday after your period begins. (Many pills are labeled for a Sunday start)
3. On the fifth day after you start your menstrual period.
4. Today, if there is absolutely no chance that you could be pregnant.

Use foam and condoms or another back-up method to protect you from pregnancy during your first month on the pill and with antibiotics. (see below)

Following cycles: After you have completed your first packet of pills, you begin another packet the following day. On a 28-day pill regimen you take a pill every day. As soon as one packet of 28 pills has been completed, begin a new packet. Take the pill at approximately the same time each day so that you form a habit of regularity in taking them, and to keep a steady level of hormones in your system.

B. PROTECTION

Unless otherwise informed by your care provider, you may assume that you are protected from pregnancy after you have completed your first cycle of pills. Your protection from then on is continuous, including the time you are having your period. If you become ill and have several days of severe diarrhea, or if you are taking antibiotics, use foam and condoms or another backup method for the remainder of that cycle.

C. MENSTRUAL PERIODS

You may expect your period to begin sometime during the last seven days of each packet of pills. The hormones in the pill produce menstrual periods less in amount and duration. This should not be a cause for concern.

D. MINOR PROBLEMS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE AS SIDE EFFECTS OF THE PILL (CHANGES IN HORMONE LEVELS)

1. Spotting (breakthrough bleeding): It is caused by the slight change of hormone levels caused by the pill and it usually stops after 1-2 cycles. Continue taking your pills – they will still be effective. Call us if the problem does not resolve by the third pack of pills.

If the amount of bleeding is less than that of a normal period, continue taking your pills as usual until the time of your first check-up.

2. Delayed or missed Period: A delayed or missed period does not necessarily mean that you are pregnant. Call your care provider if you miss a period and have missed one or more pills. If you have not missed any pills and no period occurs during the last 7 days

of a packet, begin a new packet as usual. If no period occurs by the end of the second packet, do not begin a third packet. Use foam and condoms to protect you from pregnancy, do a home pregnancy test or call for an appointment in the office.

3. Missed Pills: If you miss only one pill, take it as soon as you remember it, even though this may mean you have to take two pills on the same day. You will probably still be protected from pregnancy.

If you miss two pills, take two pills as soon as you remember and two the next day. Use your backup method until your next period. You may experience irregular breakthrough bleeding throughout the remainder of the cycle as a result of the change in the usual hormone levels.

If you forget one or more pills and miss a period, stop taking the pill and use a backup method of birth control. You need a pregnancy test before continuing your pills.

4. Nausea and Vomiting, Weight Gain, Breast Tenderness: Although annoying, they are not dangerous and they can be expected to stop after the first few cycles. If you experience nausea, try taking your pill at bedtime or with food or milk.
5. Vaginal Itching and Discharge: Some women taking oral contraceptives seem more likely to get certain vaginal infections. Although these symptoms are annoying they are not dangerous since such infections are readily diagnosed and treated without difficulty. Call for an appointment.

E. THE FOLLOWING RARE SYMPTOMS REQUIRE THAT YOU STOP THE PILL AND GET PROMPT MEDICAL ATTENTION

SEVERE HEADACHE, SEVERE LEG CRAMPS, SEVERE ABDOMINAL PAIN, CHEST PAIN, BLURRED VISION:

These are danger signals, which can indicate problems. If you experience any of these symptoms, STOP TAKING THE PILL IMMEDIATELY. Call the office for an appointment. In the meantime, use foam and condoms or another backup method for protection. Do not be alarmed by irregular bleeding after you have stopped the pills. This is an expected result of stopping the pills without completing a cycle.

If you smoke more than 14 cigarettes a day, watch more carefully for pill danger signals. Smokers should probably stop taking birth control pills at age 35. Even better, STOP SMOKING. You can talk to us about methods to help you quit.

Be sure to mention that you are taking birth control pills anytime you are hospitalized or seen by a doctor or other care provider.

- F. If you miss two periods in a row, do a pregnancy test, even if you took your pills every day.

If you have any additional problems not covered here, do not hesitate to call the Midwifery office at 275-7892 for further assistance.

