

Benefits of Birth Control Pills:

- Effective, safe, and reversible
- Decreases menstrual cramps, pain and bleeding
- Lessens risk of cancer of uterus and ovaries
- Reduces ovarian cysts and endometriosis
- Improves acne
- Regulates periods

How do I start my first pack of pills?

Different brands of birth control pills are started in different ways: most brands are started the first Sunday after your next period begins.

How do I take my pills?

Birth control pills must be taken at the same time every day. The first 21 pills contain the hormones. The last 7 pills are non-hormonal sugar pills. We recommend that you take all 28 pills. Your period should start sometime during the week you are taking the last 7 pills, and it may last anywhere from a few hours to all 7 days. Take all 7 of the last week of pills, regardless of when your period starts or how long it lasts. After you have finished one pack, begin a new pack of pills the next day. You will always be starting a new pack of pills on the same day every month. If you experience nausea, take the pill with food and at bedtime.

How many pills do I have to take until I am safe from getting pregnant?

We recommend that you use a back-up method of contraception for two weeks. A back-up method is any other contraceptive (such as condom, spermicide, abstain).

When during the day should I take my pills?

It does not matter what time of the day, as long as you take your pills at the same time every day. To help you remember to take your pills, take them with a regularly scheduled activity like going to bed, eating a meal, or watching a particular TV program. Some people set an alarm on their phone as a reminder.

What if I forget to take a pill?

The risk of pregnancy is highest when a new pill pack is started late or pills in the third week are missed. Follow these guidelines if you miss a pill. If one pill is missed, it should be taken as soon as it is remembered, even if it means taking two pills in one day. The remaining pills should be taken as usual, one per day. Use a back-up method such as condoms for seven days.

If two or more consecutive pills in the first or second week of the pack are missed, take a pill as soon as it is remembered with the rest of the pills taken on their normal day. Use a back-up method (condoms) for seven days.

If two or more pills are missed in the third week, take a pill as soon as it is remembered and then be sure to take seven hormonal pills in a row. This means you need to skip the fourth non-hormonal (sugar pills) week of the pills and begin a new pack. You will probably not have a period this month. Use a back-up method (condoms) for seven days.

Keep in mind that it is very common to have break through bleeding/spotting when a pill is missed, or taken late.

What if I have bleeding or spotting between my periods?

Break-through bleeding or spotting is very common the first few months you are on the pill. Also, it can occur when you do not take your pills at the same time every day. The bleeding may be like a normal period or it may be just light spotting. Do not stop your pills. Continue taking the pills as directed at the same time every day. If the bleeding continues beyond the first two or three months, even though you are taking your pills correctly, or if it becomes heavier than a normal period, call the clinic. You may need a change of pills.

What if I miss a period?

Missed pills, some other medications, or an illness such as vomiting/diarrhea may increase your chances of being pregnant. Do a home pregnancy test or call the clinic for a pregnancy test if you had any of the above situations. Remember. . . your periods may be much lighter when you are taking the pill, and it may last for only a few hours.

Is it all right to take other medication when I am taking the pill?

Always tell your health care provider/pharmacist that you are using birth control pills. Other drugs may decrease the effectiveness of the birth control pill. Ask about possible interactions whenever you start using a new medication. You may need to use a back-up method of birth control.

Some drugs which may interfere: Antibiotics (especially Rifampin), barbiturates, antihistamines, anticonvulsants.

What if I run out of pills?

Try not to! Always know how many packs of pills you have on hand. When you start your third to last pack, call the health department to set up your next appointment. If you do run out, you can use other effective methods available without a prescription such as spermicide and condoms.

What do I do when I want to stop taking the pill?

Finish a whole pack of pills before you stop unless you are having side effects. Your first period after stopping pills may be on time or it may be several weeks late. If you stop the pills because you want to become pregnant, it is recommended that you use another method of birth control for three months so you can establish your normal cycle. Usually your periods go back to the way they were before going on the pill.



DO NOT TAKE BIRTH CONTROL PILLS IF:

- You have had a stroke, heart attack, or have angina. .
- You are 35 years of age and smoke.
- You had a blood clot in the deep veins.
- You have active liver disease.
- You have or had a liver tumor.
- You had or suspect cancer of breast or uterus.
- You have undiagnosed abnormal bleeding from the vagina.
- You may be pregnant.
- You have uncontrolled blood pressure.
- You have diabetes with neuropathy, retinopathy or peripheral vascular disease.
- You have migraines associated with the following symptoms of cerebral ischemia:
 - visual field defects
 - blindness
 - double vision
 - weakness in extremities
 - numbness and tingling in extremities
 - inability to speak or slurred speech
 - dizziness



DO NOT SMOKE CIGARETTES WHILE TAKING BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

**DO YOU KNOW YOUR AND YOUR PARTNER'S
HIV STATUS?
IF NOT, FREE TESTING IS AVAILABLE.**

**BIRTH CONTROL PILLS DO NOT
PREVENT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED
INFECTIONS - USE CONDOMS ALSO**

**WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE
AGE ARE ADVISED TO TAKE FOLIC
ACID SUPPLEMENT AND HAVE
HEPATITIS B VACCINE**

Early Danger Signals

Notify your health care provider or seek medical attention **immediately** if you experience:

Severe:

- Abdominal Pain
- Sharp chest pain, coughing up blood, shortness of breath when breathing in
- Eye problems, partial or complete loss of vision, blurring vision
- Speech problems
- Leg pain, calf or thigh, swelling, tenderness, heat over area
- Headaches with symptoms of cerebral ischemia: visual field defects, blindness, double vision, weakness in extremities, numbness and tingling in extremities, inability to speak or slurred speech, dizziness

**For more information or an
appointment call:**

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Birth Control Pill Pointers



1-800-432-4121

www.nwhealth.org