

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE INSTRUCTIONS

The birth control pills, when take correctly under a health care provider's direction are very effective in preventing pregnancy.

HOW TO START THE PILL: We recommend you start taking the pill the first Sunday after you start your period, even if you bleed on a Saturday take the first pill Sunday (the very next day). The only time you would not start on a Sunday would be if your menses started that day; then you would wait one week until the following Sunday to take your first pill. The advantage of this regimen is you never have a period on the weekend and mark every 5th Sunday on your calendar as a starting day. Take one pill EVERY DAY thereafter until you finish the packet. It is very important that you take the pills daily and regularly and within two hours of the same time each day. You may find that it is convenient to take them at bedtime or after the evening meal. To prevent pregnancy, you need to use another method of contraception for one month. The usual schedule is one pill per day for 28 days. Take a pill every day at the same time. The other colored tablets are "blanks". They contain no hormones and you will begin menstruation sometime while you are taking these "blank" pills.

MISSED PILLS- follow the package insert for specific instructions.

Misses pills (Combo OC)	When to Take Missed Doses	Backup Contraception	Emergency Contraception
One pill	As soon as remembered	No	May consider if other doses missed in the past month
Two pills in a row	One as soon as remembered Throw out the remaining missed pills	Yes for 7 days	Should consider if during the first week
Two pills in a row during the last week	Same as two pills PLUS skip placebo pills and start new pack OR use backup contraception	Yes until 7 active pills taken IF new pack is not started right away	May consider

MENSTRUATION

1. Breakthrough bleeding (spotting) is common during the first few months a woman is on an oral contraceptive; don't be alarmed if you experience this. If you experience spotting after several months of pill use, make sure you are taking the pill correctly as directed above. Also, be sure to discuss this at the time of your first pill check.
2. Withdrawal bleeding (your period) usually occurs during the 7 days of hormone free pills (placebos). Your periods may be lighter and shorter than usual. Some women have only a half-day of spotting when they are off the pills for that week or taking different colored tablets. Occasionally, you may even miss a period entirely. If you have been taking the pills as directed and have not missed any pills, you are most certainly not pregnant and should start the next package even if you have not had a period. If you miss two periods in a row, start your next pill packet and call for an appointment as soon as possible.

SIDE AFFECTS:

A common side effect is bleeding or spotting between periods. If this occurs, you should continue to take the pills. If spotting persists for more than 3 months, please come to the clinic.

Some women experience mild nausea, breast tenderness, water retention, weight gain, increased appetite or increased vaginal discharge. The side effects disappear or level off within 3 months. If not, your pill may be changed to suit your own body's needs.

SMOKING AND TAKING PILLS:

The risk of heart problems, elevated blood pressure (hypertension), stroke and blood clots are almost doubled for women who smoke and take the pill.

RISKS:

The primary risk is an increased tendency of blood to form clots in certain areas of the body (thromboembolic disease). This is rare! Of course it isn't rare enough if it happens to you. The body usually warns you of early abnormal signs. The signs to watch for are:

- SEVERE HEADACHES
- SUDDEN BLURRING OR LOSS OF VISION, a sensation of flashing lights
- SEVERE LEG PAIN, that is tender, warm and swollen. This is not to be confused with leg cramps
- CHEST PAIN OR SHORTNESS OF BREATH, coughing up blood

If you should experience any of these symptoms, call your clinic or health care provider or go to your nearest emergency room. Inform them you are on birth control pills. Don't wait to see if these problems will go away.

PROBLEMS & CONCERNS

If you experience severe vomiting and or diarrhea, use a back-up method of birth control since the pill may not have been absorbed properly.

Some medications can decrease the effectiveness or cause other pill related problems (e.g. spotting). **Always mention to your healthcare provider or pharmacist that you are on oral contraceptives prior to starting any other medication.**

Don't stop your pills!! Call the clinic and ask to speak to your healthcare provider.