

Woman's Health Options

The Birth Control Pill

What Is The Pill?

The Pill contains hormones similar to the natural hormones in a woman's body (estrogen and progesterin). The hormones in the Pill stop the release of an egg from the ovaries; no egg means no pregnancy.

Does It Work?

- The pill is 99% effective with perfect use. This means that with perfect use in a year, 1 in every 100 women will become pregnant using the Pill.
- **The Pill is 92% effective with typical use.** This means that in a year, 8 women in every 100 become pregnant while on the Pill; this may be due to incorrect use, missing pills, using antibiotics and/or other products that interfere with effectiveness and/or because of vomiting/diarrhea.
- The most effective way to use a pill is to take it at the same time everyday and to use it with a condom.

How Is It Used?

To **begin** the first pack:

- You can take the pill within four days after a pregnancy has ended.
- If you want to wait to start taking the Pill, start it on the first day of your period. After pregnancy the first period usually starts 4 to 8 weeks after. Put the day label on the pills so that it starts with the day you are taking the Pill.
- **You are not protected from pregnancy for the first month.** You will need to use back up contraception such as condoms and spermicide. You will be protected when you start your second pack of pills.

To use a 28 day pack:

- Take 1 pill each day at the same time (within 2 hours) for 28 days.
- The first 21 pills have hormones- the last 7 pills do not have hormones.
- You will get your period during the last 7 pills.
- When the pack is finished, start a new pack the next day even if you are still bleeding.

To use a 21 day pack:

- Take 1 pill each day at the same time (within 2 hours) for 21 days.
- When the pack is finished, **wait 7 days** before starting a new pack.
- You will get your period when you are not taking any pills.
- At the end of the 7 days without pills, start a new pack even if you are still bleeding.

*If you have problems remembering to take the Pill, try to find something you do at the same time everyday. For example, do you brush your teeth or have a coffee at the same

time everyday? Leave your pills where you are likely to see them. Or, you can set the alarm on your cell phone.

Use another method, such as a condom, for the rest of your pack if you:

- Forget a pill.
- Start a pack late or take pills at different times.
- Are on antibiotics.
- Are sick with vomiting or diarrhea.

What if I Forget the Pill?

Missing any hormone pills, especially at the beginning or end of the pack, may increase your risk of pregnancy. If you forget to take a pill follow the instructions below:

One Pill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take it as soon as you remember.• Take the next pill at your usual time.• Use back up birth control such as condoms for the rest of the pack.
Two Pills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take 2 pills as soon as you remember.• Take 2 pills the next day.• Use back-up birth control such as condoms for the rest of the pack.
Three or more pills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call your doctor or the Birth Control Centre right away.• You may need Emergency Contraception (EC).• You may have some spotting (light bleeding).

What Are The Advantages?

- Convenient, it does not interrupt sex.
- It may help lessen menstrual cramps.
- It makes periods more regular and lighter.
- It lowers the chance of some kinds of cancer.

How Will I Feel On The Pill?

- You will probably feel the same.
- Your period may be lighter or shorter.
- You may have spotting for the first 1 to 3 months.
- There is a chance of:
 - nausea (upset stomach)
 - mild headaches
 - sore breasts
 - mood swings
 - weight gain of 1 to 2 kilograms (3-5 pounds)
- If you experience these side effects for a prolonged period of time talk to your doctor about switching to a different birth control pill.

Things To Think About:

- You do not need to take a “break” from the Pill. You should have a yearly check up and Pap test to check for HPV.
- Some women should not take the Pill, especially those with high blood pressure, liver disease, severe headaches, breast cancer and circulation problems. Check with your doctor.
- Severe side effects and risks are very rare. Watch for these Pill Danger Signs:
 - Abdominal pain (severe)
 - Chest Pain (severe), cough, shortness of breath
 - Headache (severe), dizziness, weakness and numbness
 - Eye Problems (vision loss or blurring), speech problems
 - Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)**If you experience any of these call your doctor or clinic right away.**
- Risks increase in your 30’s especially if you smoke. Women who are over 35 and smoke should not take the Pill.
- low dose birth control pills may be more time sensitive and should be taken within the same **hour** everyday.

Sexual Decision Making:

- You have the right to choose to have or not have sexual intercourse.
- If you choose to have sex you may want to think about the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The Pill does not protect against STDs, including HIV/AIDS. One of the best ways to protect yourself is to use a condom when having sexual intercourse.
- It can be helpful to talk to your partner about these choices before you have sex.

Medications And the Pill:

Some medications can interfere with the Pill, including antacids and cough syrup. A list is given on the back of this page. If you are uncertain about whether a medication will interfere with the pill, ask a pharmacist or use a condom until you get your period.

For More Information Call:

The Birth Control Centre	780-735-0010
Options Sexual Health Association	780-423-3737
Woman’s Health Options	780-484-1124
STD Clinic	780-413-5156
Capital Health Link	780-408-5465

Canadian Women’s Health Network
Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada

www.cwhn.ca
www.sexualityandu.ca

**THE FOLLOWING MEDICATIONS MAY INTERFERE WITH YOUR
BIRTH CONTROL PILL:**

Seizure Medications

Phenobarbital, Luminal, Carbanazebine, Tegertol, Esthosuximide, Zarotin, Phenytoin, Dilantin, Pimidone, Mysoline

Sleeping Pills

Barbituates, Secobaritol, Seconal, Tuinal, Pentobarbital, Nembutal, Anobarbital, Amytal, Chlorhydrate, Equanal, Miltown

Antibiotics

Ampicillin, Ampicin, Penbriten, Penicillin, Bicillin, Crystapen, Griseofulvin, Chloramphenicol, Metronidazole, Flagyl, Neomycin, Neo-Medrol, Neo-Decadron, Nitrofurantoin, Sulfonimides, Gantanol, Sulfadits, Dragenan, Novosoxizoli, Tetracycline, Rifampicin

To Prevent Swelling

Phenylbutazone, Butazoloidine, Phenbuff

Antihistamines, Cold or Allergy Pills/Liquid

Benadryl, Insomol, Atarax, Chlortripolon, Actified, Antistine, Claritin, Contact C, Cold FX, Corsym, Dimetane, Dametapp, Drixoral, Hismonal, Histaspan, Ornade, Multipax, Optime, Pancetyl, Periactin, Phenesgen, Seldane, Sinutab, Tavist, Trinalin, Umicon, Neocitron, Reactin,

Antacids

Tums, Roloids, Maalox, Digel

Herbal Remedies

Anything that speeds up your metabolism may affect the absorption of your pill for example: Hydroxycut, Xendrine, Ephedrine; any herbal or natural cleanses.

Also:

Antimigrane products, Vitamin E

Always check with your doctor, pharmacist, or herbalist when taking a medication in addition to your Birth Control Pill. If you are ever unsure of the effect of another medication, use a back-up method of contraception.