Your birth control pills contain estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen is the hormone that prevents shedding of the uterine lining (bleeding). Progesterone is the hormone that provides the birth control. The pill works primarily by preventing ovulation.

Other benefits of oral contraceptives:

- regular menstrual periods
- less cramping
- reduced menstrual flow
- improvement of acne
- less anemia
- decreased incidence of functional ovarian cysts
- decreased incidence of ectopic (tubal) pregnancy.
- significant protection from ovarian and endometrial (uterine lining) cancers
- decreased incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease
- decreased incidence of non-cancerous breast problems.

"**Quickstart**"

Take your first pill the day recommended by your provider. You are protected from pregnancy after you have taken 7 pills correctly, but we recommend using a back-up method for at least a month, until you are in the habit of taking your pills correctly. The first 21 pills are the "active hormone pills" and should be taken at the same time each day. The remaining pills are "reminder pills" to remind you to start a new pack of pills on the correct day. Sometimes during these reminder days, you will have your "period". You are protected from pregnancy every day, if pills are taken correctly. You are protected during the reminder pill week as well. A few pill packs have more than 21-days of active hormone pills. Your clinician will discuss the specifics of your prescribed pill. Take one pill at the same time each day; associate it with a meal, brushing teeth or some other regular daily activity. Just find the best time for YOU! It is very important to take your pill at the same time every day as breakthrough bleeding can occur when you take pills irregularly. Most women find that setting an alarm on their cell phone really helps!

Extended Cycling

(Skipping periods) This is possible if you are on a monophasic pill (the pill is the same dose each day, ie. all active pills are identical). See your practitioner for instructions on how to do this. NOTE: If you are on a triphasic pill (active pills change color or shape) your period probably will still come if you try to skip it. If you desire to skip your period, please discuss with your provider.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POSSIBLE SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS

The serious side effects from birth control pills are related to blood clots, which can occur anywhere in your circulatory system. Heart-attack, stroke, pulmonary embolism, and deep vein blood clots in your leg are SERIOUS side effects. These occur infrequently. The high-risk group are women who are over 35 years old, who are obese or who smoke cigarettes, but these side effects CAN happen to young women.

The SYMPTOMS of possible serious side effect include: "ACHES"

A=severe abdominal pain

C=severe chest pain, and shortness of breath

H=severe headache

E=eye problems (loss of vision, flashing lights, etc.)

S=severe pain in the calf or thigh

Severe pain anywhere should make you seek medical care. If you have any of these symptoms you should not take another pill and seek immediate medical attention.

Possible NUISANCE side effects include, but not limited to

- **Nausea**: Nausea can usually be eliminated by taking your pill with food and by having a snack 4-6 hours after taking your pill. For some it works well to take the pill at bedtime, then the nausea occurs while you are sleeping.
- **Breakthrough bleeding**: Breakthrough bleeding is when you have bleeding or spotting when you are taking your "active" (hormone) pills. If this occurs for 2-3 months and you have been taking your pills correctly, you should make an appointment for a pill follow-up and possible change of pill. If the bleeding is heavy, call and schedule a "pill follow-up" appointment.
- **Breast changes**: If you have breast enlargement and/or tenderness that lasts 2-3 cycles you may need a pill change. If you have breast enlargement and this is not a problem for you then nothing needs to be changed.
- **Weight**: A weight gain is not expected when you begin oral contraceptive but may occur for some women on some pills. A gain or loss of 10lbs or more will require an appointment and possible pill change. A gain of 3-5 lbs. is not medically significant. As many people will lose as will gain weight.

- **Mood Issues**: Feeling tired, minor headaches, or malaise (feeling "blah"), irritable, teary can be minimized by taking Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) 50-150mg every day. Try the B6 for 2 months to see if it will be effective. B6 is very inexpensive and is available at supermarkets, pharmacies and health food stores. Excess is excreted in the urine, which will be bright yellow in color.

- **Depression**: If you become depressed or depression increases with oral contraceptives even in the first few days call and discuss with your provider as soon as possible. You do not need to wait until you have taken a certain number of pills to discuss severe mood issues/depression. Call for an appointment.

- **Other nuisance side effects**: If you experience other nuisance side effects that do not go away after several cycles call and make an appointment with your provider to discuss the problem.

Most NUISANCE side effects will disappear within 2-3 cycles of use. If you are experiencing NUISANCE side effects, do not stop taking your pills mid-cycle (during the active hormone pills). Always try the pill prescribed for you for 3 cycles (packs) unless you are experiencing a sign or symptoms of a SERIOUS side eff ect or you are experiencing a problem that you cannot tolerate for 3 cycles. If you vomit a pill within 2 hours of taking it, take another pill of the same color. It is a good idea to have an "extra" pack of pills on hand for just this reason.

If you miss one of your pills take as ASAP even if it is time for your next pill. Take both pills together and you may separate them by several hours to prevent nausea. If you miss two or more pills you have interrupted your protection. Resume taking one pill a day. You must be back on your pills for 7 days in a row to be fully protected. Use back-up contraception in the meantime. If you miss a period on the pill and have taken all of your pills correctly, the likelihood of being pregnant is very small, continue taking your pills. If you are uncomfortable with this call us at 824.277.0500. You can do a pregnancy test.

FYI:

• Birth control pills are a medication and all your health care providers need to know that you are on the pill.

• Very few medications may interfere with the effectiveness of your birth control pills. Rifampin (an antibiotic) and griseofulvin (antifungal) are the two that have been confirmed to interfere with oral contraceptives. Some seizure medications can also have this effect. If you are taking seizure medications, check with your provider regarding concerns with the birth control pill. St. Johns' Wort is an herbal supplement that some women take for mild depressions which can lower the effectiveness of your pill.

• Always check the expiration date on your pill pack. The pills do not expire until the end of the month listed.

• Most women can be on the pill indefinitely.

• There is no need to take rest periods or breaks from birth control pills unless advised by your health care provider.

• Birth control pills do not cause infertility.

• If you have any doubt that you're "protected" from pregnancy, assume that you are not protected, abstain or use back up contraception and call for advice.

REMEMBER THAT BIRTH CONTROL PILLS DO NOT PROTECT YOU FROM SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES. ONLY CONDOMS CAN HELP PROTECT YOU FROM SOME SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES.

If you are having difficulty adjusting to birth control pills, please contact the clinic. A pill change may solve your problem. If you decide to discontinue pills, please make an appointment to discuss an alternative method of birth control. Try to continue the pills in your current pack until your appointment. Emergency Contraception Pills (ECP'S, morning after pills) are available at most pharmacies without a prescription. ECP can be taken up to5 days after having unprotected intercourse. Statistics are much better if taken within 24 hours.

After 3 cycles of initial pills or a change in hormonal contraception, please schedule a follow-up visit to check your blood pressure, weight and discuss any side affects you may be having. A pill/method change will be discussed at that time if needed. You will then receive a prescription for enough pills to take you to your next appointment.