



Frequently Asked Questions about Birth Control Pills

1. How do I take the pill?

- a. Take your first pill on the next Sunday after your period begins. If your period starts on a Sunday, take your pill that same day.
- b. Swallow one pill every day at the same time of the day to prevent pregnancy. It may help to take your pill when you already do something every day at a specific time such as eat a meal, go to bed or any other regular activity.
- c. While you are taking the last seven pills (week #4), your period should begin. It may be shorter than usual and the flow lighter. When you take the 28th pill or last pill, start a new package the following day. Always have an extra package on hand.
- d. During your first week of starting the pills, you must use extra protection such as foam and condoms, or just don't have sex at all. After the first week, you will be safe from pregnancy if you take your pills correctly.

2. What if I miss a pill?

- a. If you forget one pill or if you are late in taking your pill (even three or four hours late), take the pill as soon as you remember, even if it means taking two pills in one day. The chance of pregnancy is small, but to be sure you don't get pregnant, use another method of birth control (such as foam and condoms) until the end of that pack of pills.
- b. If you miss two pills in a row, take two pills a day until you are caught up to the day you are supposed to be on. For example, if a Saturday pill and Sunday pill are forgotten, take two pills on Monday and two pills on Tuesday. You will then be back on schedule. You should use another method of birth control, until the end of that pack of pills.
- c. If you miss three pills or more in a row, call the office for instructions.

3. Why doesn't the pill work sometimes?

- a. It is very rare that women get pregnant because the pill fails. One of three things usually happens to lower the hormone level of the pill in your body. This allows an egg to be released.
 1. You are late taking your pill or late starting a new package.
 2. You have diarrhea or vomiting.
 3. You are taking other medications that can prevent the pill from being absorbed. Several types of antibiotics, pain relievers, anticonvulsants, barbiturates, and tranquilizers (medicine for infections, pain, seizures and nervousness) have been found to interfere with birth control pills.
- b. If any of these happen, you should:
 1. Use extra protection (a backup method) for the rest of the package. Condoms, foams, sponges and diaphragms are alternatives. If they are not available or your partner refuses to use condoms, **DO NOT HAVE SEX**.
 2. Continue taking the pill every day at the same time.
 3. If you are late taking the pill for one day, or have vomiting or diarrhea for one day, you will need to use extra protection for one week.

4. If you are more than one day late, have diarrhea or vomiting for more than one day or take other medications, you will need to use extra protection until you start a new package of pills.
5. Always be sure all your physicians know you take birth control pills.
6. Check with a pharmacist about the specific medication you are taking to see if it interferes with the pill.
7. In all of these cases, you may also experience bleeding when you are not expecting it. This happens because the hormone level has lowered. If the bleeding becomes like a regular, full menses (period), call the office for advice.

4. What if I miss my period?

- a. Periods on the pill are often shorter and lighter. Some women only have spotting. This is normal because of the low amounts of hormones in the pill. However, if you do not have bleeding at all, there is the possibility of pregnancy.
 1. If you were late taking a pill, had diarrhea or vomiting, or took other drugs and miss your period, you should come into the office for a pregnancy test.
 2. If you were not late taking any pills, did not have diarrhea or vomiting, and did not use any other drugs, it is safe to start another package of pills. But if you miss two periods in a row or develop any symptoms of pregnancy, come in immediately for a pregnancy test.

5. What if I get spotting or bleeding between periods?

- a. Spotting or bleeding between periods may occur occasionally while you are taking birth control pills. When spotting occurs during the first two or three months you take the pill, it is considered normal. The pill should be taken continuously despite spotting. If spotting continues beyond three months, keep taking the pill and return to the office. The physician may advise a temporary or permanent change in the dosage of the pill.
- b. Spotting often occurs when a pill is missed or even taken a few hours late. Taking your pills at the same time every day should help.

6. What kind of side effects can I expect?

- a. Most women do not experience any problems taking birth control pills. However, some women do experience some changes. These symptoms usually clear up after taking two or three packages. Here are some suggestions for you to follow to relieve the problems. If they do not help, call the office. **DO NOT STOP TAKING YOUR PILL.** Your birth control pills may need to be changed.
 1. Nausea: Take pills with a full meal or snack at bedtime. Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
 2. Breast Tenderness: Cut out caffeine products in your diet; decrease salty foods, shoyu, sauces, snacks, MSG.
 3. Weight Gain: Exercise vigorously 3 or 4 times a week for 20 minutes; eat less fat and salt in your diet.
 4. Moodiness/Depression: Eat a well-balanced diet and exercise regularly; take vitamin B-Complex supplement.
 5. Darkening of Facial Skin: Use 20+ SPF sunscreen daily; wear wide-brimmed hat.
 6. Acne: Usually better but sometimes worse. Call the office to change pills.
 7. Spotting between periods: Take the pill every 24 hours. This can also be an adjustment by your body for the first 3 months on the pill. Call the office if the spotting continues past three months or occurs after intercourse.
- b. Major Side Effects: These are very rare. Women who are over the age 35 and who smoke more than a 1/2 pack of cigarettes per day are at a higher risk for these side effects. Remember – cigarettes are the problem, not the pills.

1. Blood clot in the leg, abdomen or lung
 2. Stroke
 3. Heart attack
- c. Pill warning signs (ACHES): If you experience any of the following warning signs, do not ignore them. Contact the office immediately. During non-office hours (5 pm to 8 am), call Doctors & Nurses Answering Service 808-988-2188 or go to the nearest Emergency Room.
1. **A** – Abdominal pain (Severe)
 2. **C** – Chest pain or shortness of breath (Severe)
 3. **H** – Headaches (Severe)
 4. **E** – Eye problems such as blurred vision, flashing lights or blindness
 5. **S** – Severe leg pains in calf or thigh
- d. Many of these symptoms may be related to other health problems but when you are on the pill, they require a medical checkup. You should not take the pill if you are pregnant, have breast cancer, liver disease, problem bleeding from the vagina, or have clots in blood vessels.

7. What if I want to stop taking the pill?

- a. If you decide to stop the pills, it is best to stop at the end of a pill package unless you are told by a doctor to quit immediately because of serious side effects.