

oral contraceptive pills

How do I initiate OCPs?

You can start your pills on the day you are prescribed them. Additional contraception (condoms) should be used for the first week. OR You can wait until your next period and start them the Sunday after your period begins. With this approach you do not need additional contraception.

What happens if I miss a pill?

If you miss one pill take the missed pill as soon as possible. Take the rest of the pack as usual. No additional contraception is needed. If you missed more than one take the last pill you missed now and take the rest of the pack as usual. Use an extra method of contraception (i.e. condoms) for the next seven days. If you have had unprotected sex in the previous few days you may need emergency contraception (i.e. Plan B).

Can medications affect the efficacy of my pill?

Tell your doctor about any other medications you are taking or if you are started on a new medication. Common medications that affect OCP efficacy include anti-seizure medications (phenytoin, carbamazepine), barbiturates (Phenobarbital), St John's wort, and select antibiotics (rifampin).

What are the benefits of OCP use?

- Cycle regulation
- Decreased menstrual flow & cramping
- Possible decrease of acne and hair growth
- Improvement in pelvic pain due to endometriosis
- Decreased risk of ovarian, endometrial and colon cancer

What are the risks associated with OCP use?

Common side effects include:

- Break-through bleeding
- No menses
- Mild blood pressure elevation
- Mild triglyceride elevation

Rare, but very serious side effects include:

- Deep Venous Thromboembolism or Pulmonary Embolism which are blood clots in the legs or lungs
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Development of benign liver tumors
- Who should not take OCPs?
- Women age ≥ 35 years old with migraines
- Women with migraines that have an aura
- Women age ≥ 35 years old who smoke cigarettes
- Women with current or past blood clots
- Women with current breast cancer
- Women with a prior stroke
- Women with lupus
- Women with certain blood disorders that increase their risks of blood clots
- Women with congestive heart failure

[Additional contraceptive information:](http://www.bedsider.org)

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