

FDA INSTRUCTIONS FOR ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE USE "How to take the pill"

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. **Read these instructions** anytime you are not sure what to do.
2. **Take one pill at the same time every day.** If you miss pills or take them at different times, you could get pregnant. The more pills you miss, the more likely you could get pregnant.
3. **You may have spotting or light bleeding or feel sick to your stomach during the first 1-3 packs of pills.** If you feel nauseous, do not stop taking the pill. If it does not go away, check with your doctor or clinic.
4. **Missing pills may also cause spotting or light bleeding,** even if you make up missed pills. If you take two pills to make up for a missed pill, you could also feel sick to your stomach.
5. **If you have vomiting or diarrhea, or if you take certain medications, your pills may not work as well. You must use a back-up method of birth control (such as condoms and spermicides)** until you check with your doctor or clinic. A list of medications that interact with the pill is on the back of this sheet.
6. If you have trouble remembering to take the pill, talk with your doctor or clinic about how to make pill taking easier or about using another method of birth control.
7. If you have any questions or are unsure of the information in this leaflet, call your doctor or clinic.

BEFORE YOU START TAKING YOUR PILLS

1. **Decide what time of day you want to take your pill.** You must take your pill at the same time each day in order for it to be effective.
2. Look at your pill pack to see if it has 28 or 21 pills.
 - **The 28-pill pack** has 21 "active" pills (with hormones) to take for 3 weeks, followed by 1 week of "reminder" pills (without hormones).
 - **The 21-pill pack** has 21 "active" pills to take for three weeks, followed by one week without pills.
3. Also find:
 - Where on the pack to start taking the pills
 - In what order to take the pills
 - The week numbers
4. Be sure you have ready at all times:
 - Another form of birth control (such as condoms and spermicides) to protect you against STDs, HIV, and to use as a back-up in case you miss pills.
 - An extra full pack.

WHEN TO START THE FIRST PACK OF PILLS

★Our clinicians recommend starting your pills the day of your office visit. Pick a time of day that will be easy to remember.

1. Take the first "active" pill on the day of your office visit.
2. **Use another form of birth control as a back-up method (such as condoms and spermicides).**
3. **If you have just had an abortion**, start your pill pack the day of the abortion procedure. Following an abortion, our office recommends no intercourse for two weeks and then the use of a back-up method of birth control during the first pill cycle (the entire pack of pills).

WHAT TO DO DURING THE MONTH

1. Take one pill at the same time every day until the pill pack is empty. Do not skip pills even if you are spotting or bleeding between periods, or if you feel sick to your stomach. Do not skip pills, even if you do not have sex very often.
2. When you finish a pack or switch your brand of pills:
 - 28-pills: Start the next pack on the day after your last "reminder" pill. Do not wait any days in between packs.
 - 21-pills: Wait 7 days to start the next pack. You will probably have your period during that week. Be sure that no more than 7 days pass in between 21-day pill packs.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MISS PILLS

If you are not sure what to do about the pills you have missed, always use a back-up method of birth control every time you have sex and keep taking one "active" pill each day until you can reach your doctor or clinic.

If you miss 1 "active" pill:

1. Take it as soon as you remember. Take the next pill at your regular time. This means you may take 2 pills in 1 day.
2. If the missed pill is during the first week of the pill cycle, you should use a back-up method of birth control or emergency contraception. If the missed pill is during the second or third week of your pills, you do not need to use a back-up birth control method if you have sex.

If you miss 2 "active" pills in a row in week 1 or week 2 of your pack:

1. Take 2 pills on the day you remember and 2 pills the next day.
2. Continue taking your pills one pill each day until you finish the pack.
3. You may become pregnant if you have sex in the 7 days after you miss pills. Use another method of birth control (such as condoms and spermicides) as a back-up for those 7 days.

If you miss 2 "active" pills in a row in week 3 of your pack:

1. Keep taking 1 pill every day until Sunday. On Sunday, throw out the rest of the pack and start a new pack of pills that same day.
2. You may not have your period this month, but this can be normal. However, if you miss your period for 2 months in a row, call your doctor or clinic because you might be pregnant.
3. You may become pregnant if you have sex in the 7 days after you miss pills. You must use another birth control method (such as condoms and spermicides) as a backup for those 7 days.

If you miss 3 or more "active" pills in a row during the first 3 weeks of your pack:

1. Keep taking 1 pill every day until Sunday. On Sunday, throw out the rest of the pack and start a new pack of pills that same day.
2. You may not have your period this month, but this can be normal. However, if you miss your period for 2 months in a row, call your doctor or clinic because you might be pregnant.
3. You may become pregnant if you have sex in the 7 days after you miss pills. You must use another birth control method (such as condoms and spermicides) as a backup for those 7 days.

★ **A reminder for those on 28-pill packs: If you forget any of the 7 "reminder" pills in Week 4, throw away the pills you missed. Keep taking 1 pill each day until the pack is empty. You do not need back-up birth control.**

Source: US Food and Drug Administration, Washington DC, 1992

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS:

Sharp leg pains, severe headaches, dizziness, numbness in the arms or legs, blurred vision, shortness of breath without exertion or chest pain may indicate a serious problem. Stop taking the pill immediately and call your clinic or doctor if any of these occur. Such side effects are rare, occurring in approximately 1 in 2000 patients.

MILD SIDE EFFECTS:

It can take 2 - 3 months for some women to adjust to the hormones in the pills. During this time you might experience: slight nausea, slight weight gain or bloating, breast tenderness or increase in breast size, spotting or bleeding heavier than spotting. These symptoms are not cause for concern, and you should continue taking your pills on schedule. Contact your doctor or clinic if you have any questions or if the above symptoms continue for more than 3 pill cycles.

Occasionally a woman will miss her period while taking the pill. If the pills have been taken according to these instructions, it is very unlikely that she is pregnant. If you miss a period, you should call your clinic or doctor. If pregnancy is not the cause of a missed period, a change in pill dose may re-establish a normal cycle.

MEDICATIONS THAT INTERACT WITH ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

MEDICATIONS AND DRUGS THAT MAKE THE PILL LESS EFFECTIVE:

- Antibiotics (Penicillin, E-mycin, Tetracycline, etc.)
- Antacids (Tums, Rolaids, Pepto-Bismol, etc.)
- Laxatives
- Narcotics and street drugs
- Sedatives
- Antifungal medications (Griseofulvin)
- Barbituates (Phenobarbital)
- Anticonvulsants (Dilantin, Tegretol, Mysoline)
- Rifampin

MEDICATIONS AND DRUGS THAT ARE MORE POTENT WHEN TAKEN WITH THE PILL:

- Alcohol
- Antidepressants (Elavil, Norpramin, Tofranil, etc.)
- Cortisone
- Tranquilizers (Ativan, Valium, Xanax)
- Bronchodilators (Theophylline, Theo-Dur, Slo-BID)
- Beta Blockers (Corgard, Inderal, Lopressor, etc.)

MEDICATIONS THAT ARE LESS EFFECTIVE WHEN TAKEN WITH THE PILL:

- Aspirin
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Anticoagulants (Coumadin, Heparin, etc.)
- Oral Hypoglycemics (Diabinese, Orinase, Tolinase, etc.)
- Tranquilizers (Ativan, Valium, Xanax)
- Guanethidine
- Aldomet, Aldoclor
- Blood pressure medications (Esimil, Ismelin)

MEDICATIONS THAT MAKE PILLS MORE POTENT:

- Vitamin C (take less than 100mg per day)

Source: Contraceptive Technology 18th Ed.