

Birth Control Pills (Oral Contraceptives)

WHAT DOES THE PILL DO?

The pill prevents pregnancy in a number of ways) but basically it prevents ovulation (release of the egg from the ovary) by maintaining a steady level of hormones at mid-cycle. Without an egg, fertilization, and therefore, pregnancy cannot occur. The pill, when taken properly and consistently, has an effectiveness rate of approximately 99.6%, meaning that less than one woman in one hundred becomes pregnant while using the pill in the course of one year.

HOW TO TAKE THE PILL:

Use one of these "Starts":

Sunday Start Pills

1. Start your first package on the first Sunday after your period begins whether or not you are still bleeding. If your period begins on a Sunday start the pills the same day. You will then start a new package each month on a Sunday.
2. Take one pill each day at the same time of day until all pills in the package are gone.

or

First Day Start Pills

1. Take the first pill of the first package on the first day of your period.
2. Continue taking a pill everyday in the order pills appear in the package until they are all finished.
3. You will now always be ready to start a new package on the same day of the week as the first package.

It is a good idea to take your pill at the same time as something else you do everyday (like brushing your teeth.) Use another type of birth control for the first 2 weeks of the first package. Condoms, foam, sponge and diaphragm are all good choices. You should not skip over any pill and there should be no pills left in the package when you are done.

NEVER GO A DAY WITHOUT TAKING A PILL.

The last 7 days of a 28 day package are not active birth control pills. They are "reminder" pills given for seven days so you don't get out of the habit of taking a pill every day. You are still protected from pregnancy on the "reminder" pill. You will have bleeding ("your period") sometime during these 7 days. If you begin bleeding during the first 21 active pills you still need to finish all of them in order. Never start taking the "reminder" pills before you have finished the 21 active pills.

Your period on pills will most likely be lighter and shorter than before you began taking pills. The blood might be brownish in color.

Remember: The Pill **does not protect you from the HIV/AIDS infection or any other sexually transmitted infection.** Latex condoms are the only method which can help you

prevent these infections. We recommend that you use a condom every time you have intercourse no matter what other method you use to prevent pregnancy.

What to do if you miss a pill:

1. If you miss 1 active pill take it as soon as you remember and continue taking the rest of your pills on schedule. This may mean that you take 2 pills on the same day. When you have to take 2 pills in one day you may want to space them apart by several hours to avoid nausea.

2. If you miss 2 active pills in the first or second week (first 14 days) of your package, take 2 pills today and 2 pills tomorrow. Then continue with one pill every day until the package is finished. **YOU MAY BECOME PREGNANT** even if you make up the 2 missed pills so use another type of birth control (condoms, foam) until you finish all the active pills in the package.

3. If you miss 2 active pills in the third week of the package or you miss 3 pills at any time in the package-- throw out your package and:

If you use First Day Start Pills

- start a new package today
- use another type of birth control (condoms, foam) for two weeks as extra protection against pregnancy.

If you use Sunday Start Pills:

- use another type of birth control right away (condoms, foam) as extra protection against pregnancy and continue to use it for 2 weeks.
- Sunday begin a new package of pills for two weeks.

4. If you miss 2 periods in a row call the clinic to come in for a pregnancy test.

5. If you miss a "reminder" pill you can throw away the missed pills and keep taking the rest on schedule until the end of the package. Missing a "reminder" pill will not increase your chances of pregnancy.