

BIRTH CONTROL PILL INSTRUCTIONS

Most birth control pills used contain two hormones, estrogen and progestin. These medications are prescribed to women not only for contraception, but often for other reasons including treatment of heavy or irregular bleeding, severe cramps, and acne.

Prevention of pregnancy when taking birth control pills occurs due to suppression of ovulation. Oral contraception is 99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy when no pills are missed. If missing pills occurs, the possibility of an unintended pregnancy is 96%.

STARTING THE MEDICATION

To begin taking this medicine, you must wait for your next menstrual cycle to begin. Dr. Binford recommends taking your first pill **ON THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR PERIOD** (even if it is nearly midnight). Pick a time of day which will be easy to remember.

- **YOU WILL NOT NEED A BACK-UP METHOD IF YOU START THE PILL ON THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR PERIOD.**
- **IF YOU START THE PILL LATER THAN THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR PERIOD, YOU SHOULD USE A CONDOM AS A BACK-UP METHOD UNTIL YOU HAVE FINISHED THE FIRST 7 PILLS.**

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MISS PILLS

Missing your birth control pills can increase the risk of an unintended pregnancy. Follow these instructions to prevent conception:

1. If you miss **ONE PILL**, take it as soon as you remember, then take your next pill at the regular time. This means you may take two pills in one day. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO USE CONDOMS WHEN MISSING ONLY ONE PILL.**
2. If you miss **TWO PILLS IN A ROW**, take two pills as soon as you remember, then take **ONE PILL** the next day at the regular time. Then take one pill daily until you finish the pack. **YOU MUST USE CONDOMS FOR THE NEXT 7 DAYS.**
3. If you miss **THREE OR MORE PILLS IN A ROW**, throw away the entire pack, and start a new pack of pills that same day. **YOU MUST USE CONDOMS ON THE DAYS WHEN YOU MISSED PILLS AND DURING THE FIRST 7 DAYS AFTER YOU RESTART A NEW PACK.**
4. If you are not sure what to do about missing pills, use condoms and call the office.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

1. **BREAK-THROUGH-BLEEDING** is bleeding at any time during the month other than the placebo week and is common. Call if it occurs for 3 packs in a row to discuss a possible pill change.
2. **NAUSEA** is also a common side effect of this medication. If this occurs, it can be helpful to take the pill in the morning with food. If this does not help, please call the office for advice.
3. **WEIGHT GAIN** is unlikely on today's low-dose birth control pills according to numerous studies. Many people gain weight for other reasons and mistakenly believe it is due to the pill. If you are gaining weight, call the office before stopping this medication.
4. **DEPRESSION** or mood changes are also unlikely unless you have a tendency toward depression. If so, this is important to discuss with us.

5. **DECREASE IN SEX DRIVE** may occur when taking birth control pills. It is important to think about other factors affecting sex drive including increased life stress, whether you are feeling negatively about your partner, and lack of sleep, since these issues are more likely to affect women's libido. If it seems to be due to the pill, make an appointment to discuss changing to a different pill or to discuss changing to a different birth control method other than the birth control pill.

HEALTH RISKS OF THE MEDICATION

The main risk of this medication is that of a blood clot. This is very rare in healthy people (4 people in 10,000) who have never had a blood clot, do not have high blood pressure, do not smoke over the age of 35-years-old, do not have a specific type of migraine (migraine with aura), or have any other reason to be at risk for a blood clot. Part of your annual exam at this office is to make sure that you are safe to begin and then continue this medication each year.

The following list of symptoms (“**ACHES**”) could indicate a blood clot in your body. If you have any of these symptoms, please call the office immediately or go to the emergency room.

- Abdominal pain which is severe
- Chest pain which is severe or shortness of breath
- Headaches which are severe or daily headaches
- Eye problems like blurred vision, flashing lights, blindness in one eye
- Severe leg pain in the calf or inner thigh

HEALTH BENEFITS OF THE MEDICATION

For many women, the most important benefit of pill use is the prevention of pregnancy.

Current studies of low-dose birth control pill use in healthy women show no adverse effects with long term use and in fact have found the following benefits:

1. Decrease in risk of ovarian and uterine cancer
2. No increase or decrease in risk of breast cancer
3. Prevention of ovarian cysts
4. Decrease in bleeding which prevents anemia
5. Regulation of menstrual cycle
6. Decrease in menstrual cramps
7. Possible decrease in PMS symptoms
8. Treatment of acne
9. Decrease in risk of endometriosis**
10. Decrease in risk of ectopic pregnancy**
11. Decrease in risk of PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) from gonorrhea or chlamydia**

**Endometriosis, ectopic pregnancy, and PID can damage the fallopian tubes which could lead to infertility.

Many myths remain about pill use as well. For example, there is no need to take a “break” from pills in healthy women at any time. There is also no age at which a healthy nonsmoker cannot safely take the pill until the age of 50.

Please call us with any problems you experience or questions you may have while taking the birth control pill. Most problems and concerns can be easily helped over the phone. Finally, please remember to tell other health care providers that you are taking this medication.