



ALL ABOUT THE BIRTH CONTROL PILL



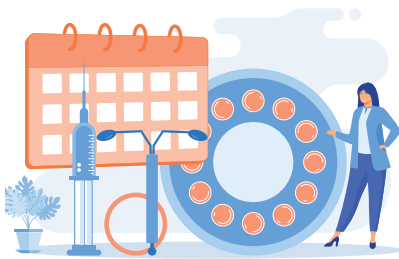
What is the birth control pill?

The birth control pill is a small pill a person takes every day to keep from getting pregnant. The pill has two kinds of hormones, estrogen and progestin, like the ones made in a person's body. There are many kinds of birth control pills with different amounts of hormones in them.



How does the birth control pill work?

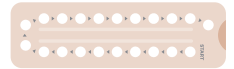
A person takes the pill every day at the same time. The pills taken during the first 3 weeks have hormones in them. The hormones stay at the level needed to prevent pregnancy. These hormones keep the eggs from leaving the ovaries. The hormones also thicken the mucus on the cervix. This thicker cervical mucus blocks sperm so they can't swim to an egg to cause a pregnancy.



How many types of pills are there?

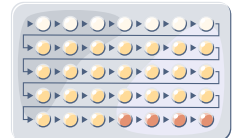
Monophasic 21-day pills

- » This is the most common type. Each pill has the same amount of hormone in it. One pill is taken each day for 21 days and then no pills are taken for the next 7 days.



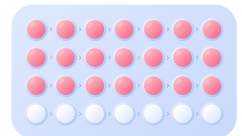
Phasic 21-day pills

- » Phasic pills contain two or three sections of different colored pills in a pack. Each section contains a different amount of hormones. One pill is taken each day for 21 days and then no pills are taken for the next 7 days. Phasic pills need to be taken in the right order.



Every day pills

- » There are 21 active pills and 7 inactive (hormone-free) pills in a pack. The two types of pills look different. One pill is taken each day for 28 days with no breaks between packets of pills. Every day pills need to be taken in the right order.



Follow the instructions on the packet. If you have any questions, ask a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. It's important to take the pills as instructed because missing pills, taking them at different times each day, or at the same time as certain other medicines may make them less effective.

93%
EFFECTIVE

How well does the birth control pill work?

The pill is very good at preventing pregnancy. Only about 7 in 100 sexually active women who use the pill get pregnant in the first year with typical use.



How can I get the birth control pill?

A Family PACT provider can help. Tell your provider about:

- » Any health problems you may have.
- » Any medicines you may be taking.

Your provider can help you decide if the pill is right for you. There are many kinds of pills. If one is not right for you, another one might be.



How do I use the birth control pill?

Your Family PACT provider will let you know the date you can start taking your pills. Your provider may tell you to take the first pill on the same day as your visit.

- » Take one pill every day until the whole pack is gone.
- » Take your pills at the same time every day.

Set an alarm on your calendar or phone to remind you to take your pills every day. For example, you could take your pill before you go to sleep at night, or after you brush your teeth in the morning.

You may not get your period each month. You can choose to skip the week of the inactive (hormone-free) pills. When you finish your third week of pills, you can start a new pack, or you can use pills already packaged to do this.

Depending on where you are in your menstrual cycle when you first start the pill, it may not start working right away. You need to use a back-up method (condoms) if you have sex for the first few days until it becomes effective.

- » If you start the pill within the first 5 days since your period started, no back-up method (like condoms) is needed.
- » If you start the pill later than 5 days after your period started, you either need to abstain from sexual intercourse or use a back-up method (like condoms) for the next 7 days.

Talk to your Family PACT provider to learn more.



What do people like about the birth control pill?

- » It does not interrupt or interfere with sexual intercourse.
- » It can help a person predict when a period will start.
- » It can lessen cramps and heavy bleeding that some people have during their periods.
- » It can also help lessen skin acne and prevent breast cysts.



What do people dislike about the birth control pill?

- » You must remember to take it at the same time every day.
- » You risk becoming pregnant if you miss your pills or do not take them at their regular time.
- » Some people may have problems with side effects.
- » You need a prescription from a provider. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first over-the-counter birth control pill available without a prescription. It is called [Opill®](#), a progestin-only hormone pill that is safe for many to use or for those advised not to take the combined estrogen-progestin pills.



What are the side effects of the birth control pill?

After starting the pill, some people may have:

- » Spotting or bleeding between periods
- » Nausea
- » Weight gain
- » Breast tenderness
- » Change in moods
- » Changes in sex drive
- » Changes in periods (early, late, or stopping altogether)



These side effects usually go away in 2-3 months once your body adjusts to the pill.



What are the warning signs of the birth control pill?

Call your provider right away if you experience:

- » Sudden headaches
- » Eye problems (blurry vision)
- » Sharp, sudden pain in the leg, chest, or abdomen



Who is not a good candidate for the birth control pill?

The pill may not be safe for some people to use. Talk with your Family PACT provider about medications you take or health problems you may have like:

- » Migraine headaches
- » Over 35 years old and smoke
- » Have a history of blood clots, heart disease, or stroke
- » Are being treated for high blood pressure or diabetes
- » Have a history of breast cancer or liver disease



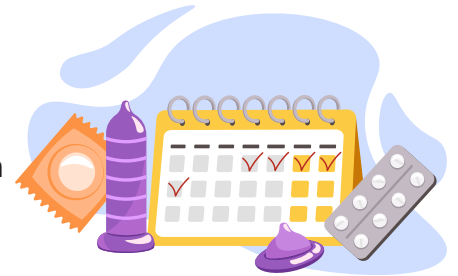
What do I do if I miss any birth control pills?

One late or missed pill (up to 48 hours):

- » Take the late or missed pill as soon as you can.
- » Keep taking a pill every day at the regular time.
- » No need to use a back-up method (like condoms).
- » You may want to use emergency contraception (EC) if you have missed pills earlier in the same pack, or if you missed pills during the last week of the previous pack.

Two or more missed pills:

- » Take only one pill as soon as you can. Throw away other missed pills.
- » Keep taking a pill every day at the regular time.
- » Use a back-up method (like condoms) until you have taken the hormonal pills for 7 continuous days.
- » If you missed pills during the third week of the pack, finish the hormonal pills, then go right to the hormonal pill of the next week. In other words, when you get to the inactive (hormone-free) pills, skip them altogether and start the next pack.



You may want to use EC if:

- » You missed two or more pills during the first week of the pack **AND** had unprotected sex during the previous 5 days.
- » Do not use ulipristal acetate (UPA) or Ella® EC pills and birth control pills at the same time.

The birth control pill does not protect against HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Use condoms when you have sex to protect yourself.



© 2024 California Department of Health Care Services, Office of Family Planning. All rights reserved. Revised July 2024. For more information, scan the QR code, visit www.FamilyPACT.org or call 1-800-942-1054.