



Children's Medical Office

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The Pill

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General instructions

Oral contraceptive pills (aka OCP, or “the pill”) are combinations of hormones normally found in a woman’s body. They are prescribed for a variety of reasons including pregnancy prevention, extremely painful menstrual cramps, highly irregular periods, and other conditions. The pill does not prevent against sexually transmitted diseases, and should always be used with a barrier method of contraception to prevent against these diseases.

The pill is taken once a day in sequence to copy the body’s normal hormone changes through the month, but prevent the body from going through these steps itself. In effect, the pill tells the body that it is pregnant, and to stop ovulating or releasing eggs. Once a month, the hormone levels in the pill decrease, telling the body that it is time to have a period.

Because hormones are very strictly controlled in the body, it is important that the pill be given at the same time every day. If the pill is given on an odd or changing schedule, the body may take over its own hormone control again, allowing the body to ovulate and restart its regular cycle.

Initial start

1. Choose a time of day when you are most likely to remember to take your pill. The pill should be taken within an hour of the same time each day. (for example if you tend to wake up and take the pill at 7am, the pill should be taken between 6am and 8am every day **even on weekends**)
2. Start the pill on the first Sunday after your period.
3. Take the pill every day.
4. When you have 5 pills left in the pack, call the pharmacy for a refill.
5. Start the next pack the day after you finish the last pack.
6. Continue taking the pill even when you have your period.
7. You must use a backup method of contraception the first month you are on the pill.

Special Instructions – What do you do if you miss a pill

1. Take your pill as soon as you remember. Take the next pill at the regular time. (For example: You are out Friday night, you forget to take your pill but remember on Saturday morning when you wake up. Take Friday's pill on Saturday night and Saturday's pill at the regular time on Saturday night.)
2. If you miss a day completely, take 2 pills at the regular time on the second night. (For example: You are out Friday night, you forget to take your pill and don't notice until Saturday night. Take both Friday's pill and Saturday's pill at the regular time on Saturday night.)
3. If you miss two days, take 2 pills at the regular time the day you remember and 2 pills the next day. You **MUST** use a backup method of contraception for the remainder of the month. (For example: You go away for the weekend and don't have a pill for Friday or Saturday. You return Sunday night. Take 2 pills on Sunday night at the regular time And 2 pills on Monday night at the regular time.)
4. If you forget for three or more days, stop taking any pills, call our office. Use another form of contraception for a month.

Note: When you miss a pill, your body's hormones may jump into action and cause you to have an irregular period even though you are on the pill. Continue the pill even if you have irregular bleeding. Call our office with any questions.

Side Effects

1. The pill can increase your risk of blood clots. Smoking also drastically increases this risk. **DO NOT** smoke if you are on the pill.
2. You may gain weight, have swelling or tenderness in your breasts, have mood swings, or increase your acne. On the other hand, some people have improved acne and mood swings on the pill. Most of these changes will happen in the first few months and then will improve. People respond to different pills in different ways – what worked for your friend may not work for you.

Call us immediately if....

- You get your period more often than usual, if you bleed more than usual, or it lasts much longer than usual.
- You have pain during intercourse or have bleeding afterward
- You have sudden chest pain, or shortness of breath
- You get pain and swelling in your leg or unusual leg pains.
- You have any concern that you may be pregnant.
- You have severe headache or changes in your vision.