

Cougar Health

The Birth Control Pill

What is the birth control pill and how does it work?

The Birth Control Pill is a small pill a woman takes each day in order to prevent pregnancy. The pill consists of two hormones (estrogen and progesterin) that keep the woman's eggs from leaving the ovaries. There are many types of pills with different amounts of hormones in them.

The pill is very effective in preventing pregnancy. Only about 1 to 8 women out of 100 using the pill for a year get pregnant.

How do women get the Pill?

From a health care provider by prescription and typically after an exam. A provider should be aware of any health problems and any medications that a woman is taking.

There are many kinds of pills and if one is not right, another one may be. A health care provider can help in selecting the appropriate one.



What do women like about the Pill?

- It does not interrupt during sexual intercourse.
- It can help women regulate their menstrual cycle.
- It can help relieve headaches and other problems.
- It can help lessen cramps and heavy bleeding associated with some women's period.

What do some women dislike about the pill?

- The pill must be taken every day.
- Some women may have problems with side effects.

How is the Pill used?

A woman begins taking the pills on the day that the health care provider recommends.

- One pill is taken each day until the whole pack is gone.
- Pills should be taken at the same time every day.

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It is recommended that a woman selects a time of day that is easy to remember. Also, during the first two weeks of starting the pills, the user should abstain from intercourse or use another method of birth control, like condoms, before the pills are effective.

What if a Pill is missed?

There is a chance that a woman could get pregnant when a pill is missed. If this happens, women should:

- Use another method, like condoms, AND
- Ask about Emergency Contraception (EC) pills.
- Talk to a health care provider about proper usage of birth control for missed pills.



What are the side effects of the Pill?

Possible side effects may include those listed below and should be discussed with a health care provider if bothersome:

- Period changes, or spotting and bleeding between periods
- Nausea
- Breast tenderness
- Mood or weight changes
- Changes in sex drive
- Headaches

The Pill may not be safe for some women.

Women with certain risk factors should discuss them with a health care provider prior to using the Pill:

- Women over 35 years old who smoke.
- Women who have had blood clots, heart disease, or a stroke.
- Women who have high blood pressure or diabetes.
- Women who have breast cancer or liver disease.

Women should watch for these warning signs:

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

A health care provider should be notified right away if any of these signs develop.

Keep in mind:

The Birth Control Pill does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV, during sexual intercourse. Condoms should be used in addition to the pill to protect against diseases.

Resource: www.familypact.org
Family PACT: 1-877-FAM-PACT