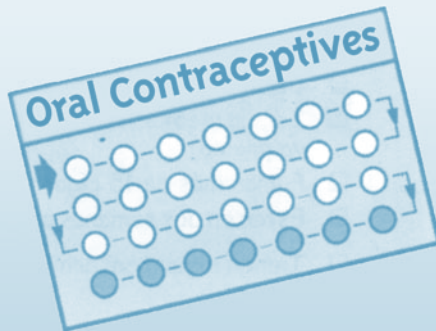


# The Pill

Combined Oral Contraceptives



**Balanced Counseling Strategy**



# The Pill

## Combined Oral Contraceptives

### General information:

- Requires that you take 1 pill every day.
- May cause irregular bleeding during the first few months of use.
- May also cause absence of periods or other side effects.
- Safe for a woman with HIV/AIDS, even if she takes antiretroviral (ARV) medicines.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

### Effectiveness for pregnancy prevention: Pregnancy rate in first year of use is:

- Correct use (no missed pills) — less than 1 pregnancy per 100 women (1%)
- Typical use (some missed pills) — 8 pregnancies per 100 women (8%)

### How method works:

- You take 1 pill every day. The pill is most effective when you take the pill at the same time every day.
- The pill contains small amounts of the hormones estrogen and progestin.
- These hormones make the mucus around the cervix thick. This stops sperm from meeting an egg.
- They also prevent the release of eggs from the ovaries (ovulation).

### Important facts:

- You control the method.
- Can be stopped at any time without a provider's help.
- Does not interfere with sex.
- You have to remember to take a pill once a day, every day.
- Does not protect against STIs, including HIV.
- Use condoms (male or female) if you feel at risk of STIs.

### Method not advised if you:

- Are breastfeeding an infant less than 6 months old.
- Smoke cigarettes and are 35 years old or older.
- Have high blood pressure.

- Have certain uncommon serious diseases of the heart, blood vessels or liver, or breast cancer. Discuss with your provider.
- Have gall bladder disease. Discuss with your provider.
- Have migraine headaches (a type of severe headache) and are 35 years old or older.
- Have migraine aura (sometimes seeing a growing bright spot in one eye) at any age.
- Take medicine for seizures or take rifampicin.

**Side effects:**

- Lighter periods, irregular bleeding, or spotting between menstrual periods. These are common in the first 3 months of use.
- May also cause infrequent bleeding or absence of menstrual periods (amenorrhea).
- May cause headaches, breast tenderness, or weight change. These usually lessen or stop within the first few months.
- These are normal and not signs of illness.
- Not all women have these side effects.

**Health benefits:**

- Helps prevent cancer of the uterus and ovaries.
- Helps prevent pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).
- May help protect against ovarian cysts and anemia.
- Reduces menstrual cramps and menstrual bleeding problems.

**How to use:**

- Begin with the first pill in the packet as directed by your provider.
- TAKE 1 PILL EVERY DAY until you finish the packet.
- Take the pill at the same time every day, for example every night before going to bed.
- If you vomit within 2 hours of taking a pill, take another pill from your packet as soon as possible. Continue taking pills as usual.
- If vomiting or diarrhea continues for more than 2 days, follow instructions for 1-2 missed pills on the next page.
- Have a new packet of pills on hand before you finish your 28-day or 21-day packet.

<b>If using:</b>	<b>Do this:</b>
A 28-day packet and you finish the packet	Begin a new packet immediately.
A 21-day packet and you finish the packet	Wait no more than 7 days before starting the new packet.

- If you get your pills from a pharmacy, use the instructions in this brochure.
- If you miss any pills, follow the instructions on the next page.

## Follow these guidelines if you miss 1 or more pills:

If you:	Do this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Missed 1 or 2 pills</li> <li>– OR –</li> <li>▪ Started a new packet 1 or 2 days late</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take a pill as soon as possible.</li> <li>▪ Keep taking pills as usual. (You may end up taking 2 pills at the same time or on the same day.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Missed 3 or more pills in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of pill cycle</li> <li>– OR –</li> <li>▪ Started a new packet 3 or more days late</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take a pill as soon as possible.</li> <li>▪ Use a backup method (condoms) or avoid sex for the next 7 days.</li> <li>▪ If you had unprotected sex in the past 5 days, consider taking emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs).</li> </ul>
<p>Missed 3 or more pills in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the pill cycle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take a pill as soon as possible.</li> <li>▪ Finish all hormonal pills in the packet. For a 28-pill packet, throw away the 7 non-hormonal pills.</li> <li>▪ Start a new packet the next day.</li> <li>▪ Use a backup method (condoms) or avoid sex for the next 7 days.</li> <li>▪ If you had unprotected sex in the past 5 days, consider taking ECPs.</li> </ul>
<p>Missed any non-hormonal pills (last 7 pills in 28-day pill packet)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discard the missed non-hormonal pill(s).</li> <li>▪ Keep taking the pill, one each day. Start the new packet as usual.</li> </ul>

## Return to the health care facility any time if:

- You have any questions or problems.
- You have missed 3 or more pills, had sex in the past 5 days, and want to avoid pregnancy. You can take emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs).
- You develop any health problems.
- You think you may be pregnant.
- After 1 year for follow-up and to get more pills.