

Take your pill at the same every day. It is the day-to-day action of the pill that provides protection.

Birth Control Pills

What is the birth control pill?

The birth control pill is an oral (taken by mouth) contraceptive, or way to prevent pregnancy. It is a man-made version of 2 hormones, estrogen and progestin, which are found naturally in your body.

How are they packaged?

Birth control pills come in packs of 21, 28 or 91 pills. It is important to keep the pills in the original container because it will help you keep track of your dosage schedule. Be sure to take your pills in the order they appear in the container.

What are the differences between 21-day, 28-day and 91-day packs?

Both the 21-day pack and the 28-day pack contain 21 active pills. An active pill contains the hormones. The only difference between these packs is that the 28-day pack contains 7 more pills, which are inactive pills without hormones.

The 91-day pack contains 84 pills with a combination of the 2 hormones and 7 pills with 1 hormone at a lower dose. You will only have your period every 3 months with the 91-day pack, whereas you will have your period every month with the other two packs.

How does the birth control pill work?

The birth control pill prevents your ovaries from releasing eggs by changing your hormone levels. When you take birth control pills, your menstrual cycle continues. However, you may notice less menstrual bleeding and have a shorter period.

How effective is the birth control pill?

The birth control pill can be a very effective way to prevent pregnancy. If it is taken as directed (every dose at the same time each day and no pills are missed), fewer than 1 out of every 100 women will become pregnant in a year.

Will the birth control pill prevent sexually transmitted diseases?

The birth control pill does not protect you from the HIV virus or any other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Only abstinence (no vaginal sex) or barrier devices, such as male or female condoms, can provide some protection against STDs.

How do I take the birth control pill?

Never let your tablet supply run out. Take your pill at the same time every day. It is the day-to-day action of the pill that provides protection, not just taking a single pill. **Birth control pills must be taken correctly in order for them to work.**

What if I am taking other medicines?

Certain medicines, such as tranquilizers, antibiotics or antiviral medicines, may make the birth control pill work less well. This may increase your risk of pregnancy. For this reason, tell your healthcare providers who prescribe medicines about all medicines you are taking before you start taking the birth control pill. If you are already taking the pill, you need to tell these healthcare providers you are taking the pill whenever they prescribe other medicines.

Who should not take the pill?

You should not take the pill if you are pregnant, smoke cigarettes or have had:

- Blood clots
- Liver disease
- Heart disease
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding
- Cancer of the breast, uterus or liver
- Certain types of migraine headaches
- High blood pressure that is not controlled with medicine

What are the side effects of the birth control pill?

Many people have no side effects while taking the pill. However, there is still the possibility side effects may occur, and some are more likely to occur than others.

Most Common

- Nausea
- Weight gain
- Breast fullness or tenderness
- Acne
- Headache
- Changes in menstrual bleeding

Less common

- Diarrhea
- Bloating
- Vomiting
- Decreased sex drive

Rare

- Rash
- Dizziness
- Increase in blood sugar level
- Increase in blood pressure
- Blotchy darkening of the skin
- Intolerance to wearing contact lenses
- Increase in cholesterol levels (triglycerides and LDL cholesterol, sometimes called “bad” cholesterol)
- Depression (may be more likely if you have had depression in the past)

Many of these side effects, such as nausea and headache, will disappear as your body adjusts to the pill. However, if any of these side effects last longer than 2 or 3 months after starting the pill, you should call your physician or your clinic. Taking each dose with food may help prevent stomach upset. You may miss a period when your body is initially adjusting to the pill. If you miss 2 periods in a row, call your physician or clinic.

If you notice any of the following symptoms while taking the pill, notify your physician or clinic **right away**:

- Severe depression
- Shortness of breath
- Lumps in the breast or abdomen
- Severe headache or visual changes
- Severe pain in the chest or stomach
- Pain, swelling and/or redness in the leg(s)
- Tingling or weakness on one side of the body

To reduce serious side effects affecting the heart and blood circulation, do not smoke cigarettes while using the birth control pill. Women who are 35 or older and smoke 15 or more cigarettes per day should consider another method of birth control due to the increased chance of developing a blood clot. Ask your physician about resources to help you stop smoking.

When do I take the pill?

In general, there are 2 different ways you can begin taking birth control pills.

Sunday start

Begin taking the pills on the first Sunday after the beginning of your period, even if you are still bleeding. If your period begins on a Sunday, take your first pill on that day. **Make sure you use another method of birth control for at least the first 7 days you are taking these pills.**

First-day start

Begin taking the pills on the first day of your period. This way, you avoid the risk of early ovulation (release of an egg from your ovary) and the need to use another form of birth control.

Please note

Some manufacturers and physicians recommend using a second form of birth control, usually for 7 days. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk with your physician or pharmacist first.

What if I forget to take a pill?

Sunday start

- **If you miss 1 pill**, take the pill as soon as you remember. If you don't remember until the next day, take it along with the pill for that day. Other forms of birth control are not needed after the first 7 days.
- **If you miss 2 pills in a row during week 1 or week 2 of your pack**, take 2 pills on the day you remember and take 2 pills the following day. Then, continue taking the pills on your regular schedule.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for at least the next 7 days to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

- **If you miss 2 pills in a row during week 3 of your pack**, take 1 pill every day until Sunday. Start a new pack on Sunday.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for at least the next 7 days to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

- **If you miss 3 or more pills in a row during the first 3 weeks of your pack**, take 1 pill every day until Sunday. Start a new pack on Sunday.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for the rest of your pack and for the next 7 days after starting a new pack to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

First-day start

- **If you miss 1 pill**, take the pill as soon as you remember. If you don't remember until the next day, take it along with the pill for that day. Other forms of birth control are not needed.
- **If you miss 2 pills in a row during week 1 or week 2 of your pack**, take 2 pills on the day you remember and take 2 pills the following day. Then, continue taking the pills on your regular schedule.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for at least the next 7 days to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

- **If you miss 2 pills in a row during week 3 of your pack**, discard the rest of your pack and start a brand new pack that same day.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for the rest of your new pack to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

- **If you miss 3 or more pills in a row during the first 3 weeks of your pack**, discard the rest of your pack and start a brand new pack that same day.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for at least the next 7 days to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

91-day pack

- **If you miss 1 pill in the first 84 days of the schedule**, take the pill as soon as you remember. If you don't remember until the next day, take it along with the pill for that day. Other forms of birth control are not needed.
- **If you miss 2 pills in a row**, take 2 pills on the day you remember and 2 pills the next day. Then, continue taking the pills on your regular schedule.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for at least the next 7 days after you restart your pills to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

- **If you miss 3 pills in a row**, throw away the pills that you missed. Restart by taking your pill for the actual day it is. You may experience bleeding during the week following the missed pills.

Warning: You must use a second method of birth control for at least the next 7 days after you restart your pills to avoid the chance of becoming pregnant during that month.

If you miss any of the pills in the last 7 days of the schedule, throw away the missed pills and keep taking the rest of the pills until you finish the pack. Alternative forms of birth control are not needed.

Please be sure to read the patient information sheet that comes with your birth control pills and discuss the directions with your physician or pharmacist if you have any questions or concerns.

How do I store and dispose of my medicine?

Keep this medicine:

- In its original container and tightly closed
- Out of reach of children
- At room temperature
- Away from heat and direct light
- Away from damp places, including the bathroom

Dispose of any medicine after the expiration date. This medicine could be harmful to children, pets or others if taken by accident. To ensure safe and secure disposal of leftover medicine, return unused or unwanted medication to a collection site.

- Ask your local pharmacy if they take back this medicine for disposal.
- Participate in take-back events. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service, and ask if a medicine take-back program is available in your community.
- Look up local collection sites through the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) website: **apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1**
- Call the DEA at 800.882.9539 to locate a disposal site in your area.

If you are unable to locate an authorized collector, dispose of the medicine as follows:

1. Take the medicine out of the original container.
2. Mix it with kitty litter, dirt or coffee grounds.
3. Place the mix in a sealable bag or container.
4. Throw it away in your household trash. Make sure to remove all personal information from the original container.

Please be sure to read the patient information sheet that comes with your medicine. Talk with your physician, pharmacist or healthcare provider if you have questions about how to take this medicine.