

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

Oral Contraceptive Pills are made up of two hormones: estrogen and progesterone. "The Pill" has both contraceptive and non-contraceptive benefits.

NON CONTRACEPTIVE BENEFITS

Benefits include a decrease in painful periods, decrease in heavy periods, regulation of the menstrual cycle, decrease in the severity of endometriosis, decrease incidence and severity of acne and a decrease in fibroid tumors. Oral contraceptives provide protection against endometrial and ovarian cancers and a decrease in ovarian cysts. There is also benefit in an increase in bone mineral density.

CONTRACEPTIVE BENEFITS

Benefits include protection from pregnancy, a decreased risk of pelvic inflammatory disease and ectopic pregnancy.

Description and Directions

Traditional Oral Contraceptive regimens consist of taking the active hormone pills for 21 days followed by 7 days of placebo (inactive pills). Newer formulations may extend the active pills for more than 21 days. When you are taking the placebo pills (inactive pills) you can expect your menstrual period. Your period may not begin the first day of your placebo pill, sometimes taking two or three days (or more) to begin. Sometimes you are still on your menses when you start your new pack of pills.

You will be given direction from your provider on when to start your birth control pill. Some of the options are as follows

Quick Start: Begin your pill the day that you fill your prescription regardless of where you are in your menstrual cycle. If you are using the pill for contraception you must use a condom or abstain from sex for the first 7 days after starting your pills. **If you have had unprotected sex since your last period you must use one of the methods below.**

Traditional Start: Begin your pills on the first Sunday following the start of your period. If your period starts on a Sunday start your pills on that day. Use a condom for backup for seven days if you are sexually active.

Period Day Start: Begin your pills on the very first day of your period. You do not need to use a condom if you chose this time for pill start.

Common Side Effects: You may notice breast tenderness, nausea, mood changes, mild headaches or spotting during the first few cycles on the pill. Generally these problems subside after a few cycles. At times the problems persist and we may need to change the type of pill that you are on. We will schedule a 3 month check up after starting the oral contraceptives to make sure you are satisfied.

Please note that spotting is very common when first starting on an Oral Contraceptive Pill. It does not mean that the pill is "not working". If spotting occurs continue to take your pills at the

same time every day. Stopping your pill at any time or even taking it late will cause spotting or a full period. Stopping or taking your pill late can also put you at high risk for a pregnancy.

IF YOU MISS ONE BIRTH CONTROL PILL: Take your pill as soon as you remember. You do not need to use a condom. Depending on where you are in your cycle this missed pill could cause spotting.

IF YOU MISS TWO BIRTH CONTROL PILLS: If you miss your pill in the first or second row of your pack take two pills for two consecutive days and then one pill per day as usual until the pack is finished. Use a condom or do not have sex for the next seven days following your missed pills ****If you have missed two consecutive pills in the first two weeks you may be at risk for an unintended pregnancy. **Consider: Plan B or Emergency Contraception.**

If you are in the third row of pills and you miss two pills, take one pill every day until you finish the active pills. Start right into a new pack of pills the next day without taking the placebos. You may miss your period or you might start bleeding somewhere during your new pill pack. Keep taking the pill every day until the pack is finished. If you don't have a period after this pack is completed call the office to schedule a pregnancy test.

If you have missed 3 or more pills please call the office for directions on what to do next.

YOU SHOULD NOT BE TAKING ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES IF YOU ARE A SMOKER AND 35 YEARS OLD AND OVER, OR IF YOU HAVE A PERSONAL HISTORY OF A BLOOD CLOTTING DISORDER. Talk to your provider if you have a family history of blood clotting disorders or if you have a personal history of migraine headaches. Additional evaluation may be indicated to determine whether you are a good candidate for oral contraceptives.

As always, call or send an e-mail message to Alliance with any questions that you may have.