

# What You Should Know About The Minipill or Progesterone-Only Birth Control Pills

## **What are they?**

Minipills are contraceptive pills that do not contain estrogen like “regular” birth control pills. They contain only a progesterone which when taken correctly have an effectiveness of about 95% compared to 99% with the combined estrogen and progesterone birth control pills.

## **How do they work?**

Minipills work in several ways: thickening and decreasing cervical mucus and preventing sperm penetration, altering transport in the fallopian tubes, altering the uterine lining so it is less favorable for pregnancy, and sometimes inhibiting ovulation.

## **When can they be started?**

Minipills can be started as early as 4 weeks postpartum in breastfeeding mothers without affecting milk production or the quality of breast milk. Otherwise, they can be started at any time once pregnancy has been ruled out.

## **How to take them:**

Minipills must be taken every day continuously **within an hour of the same time every day** to be effective. Whenever a pill is taken late, back-up birth control must be used for 48 hours. It is important not to miss pills.

## **How soon are they effective?**

Minipills are effective after the first month of use (28 tablets). Back-up birth control should be used until then.

## **What will periods be like on the minipill?**

You might have regular periods, irregular spotting, or no bleeding at all on the minipill. Unlike “regular” birth control pills, you do not have a pill-free or placebo week. Your period will soon return to normal after your pills are discontinued.

Your ability to get pregnant returns right away after stopping minipills.

## **Warning signs:**

You should report severe lower abdominal pain, repeated very severe headaches or a delayed period after several cycles of regular periods on the minipill.

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