

Contact your doctor or health care provider if you have any of the following symptoms:

ACHES:

A – Abdominal Pain

C – Chest Pain

H – Headaches

E – Eye Problems

S – Severe Leg Pain

Where can you get pills?

Birth control pills require a prescription from a qualified health care provider. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

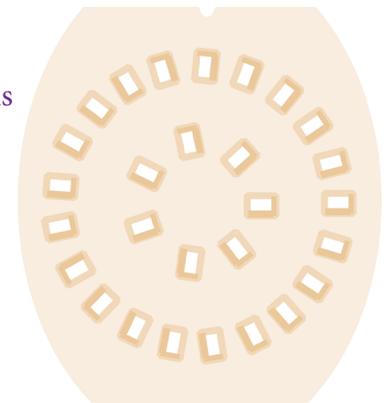
Pills

How pills work

Combination birth control pills contain both estrogen and progestin, hormones that are similar to the hormones that are produced naturally by a woman's body. The pill works by stopping the body from releasing an egg, so that there is no egg to be fertilized. Birth control pills also work by thickening the cervical mucus (liquid at the opening of the uterus) which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the pills

The pill must be taken at about the same time every day. For instructions on how to begin taking your pills, ask your health care provider. If you miss any pills, you may be at risk for pregnancy. Ask your health care provider for specific instructions. You may also ask about Emergency Contraception (EC).



Effectiveness

Pills are in the Tier 2 level of contraceptive effectiveness because preventing pregnancy depends on the user taking the pills consistently and correctly. Typically 9 out of 100 women are likely to get pregnant within 1 year of use. If a woman misses a pill, or doesn't take it at the same time every day, her chance of pregnancy goes up. Also, if a woman is taking specific medications, the pills can be less effective.

To increase effectiveness, a woman should take her pill every day at about the same time each day. Talk with a health care provider about possible drug interactions that may reduce the level of effectiveness.

Benefits of the pill

Most women report regular and lighter periods with fewer cramps and PMS symptoms, as well as a clearer complexion when taking some types of pills. Pills provide protection against ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, benign breast disease, ovarian cysts and iron deficiency. Taking pills does not interrupt sex. If you want to get pregnant, you can become pregnant immediately after you stop taking the pill.

Potential side effects and disadvantages

For some people, having to take a pill every day is a disadvantage. Most pills have a low dose of hormones but they can cause some side effects, such as spotting between periods, mild nausea or breast tenderness. Side effects usually don't last long and go away

with a change in pill type. Recent research has shown that women who take pills do not typically gain any more weight than they would gain without taking pills. Ask your provider about side effects before you quit the pill. A change in pill prescription can help decrease side effects.

Tell your health care provider about any medications you are taking, including prescriptions, over-the-counter, herbal remedies and vitamins.

Using birth control pills will not provide protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts (HPV), gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks

Some women should not take pills if they have specific health conditions. Ask your health care provider about potential health risks.

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular risks (blood clots, heart attacks, strokes), especially for women over 35. Women who use birth control pills are strongly advised not to smoke.

Risk to life and health is greater from pregnancy than from pill use. Most pills have a low dose of hormones and can be taken with little risk. Current research indicates that pill use is not associated with breast cancer.