

Hormonal Contraception

General Information:

- To be most effective, take the pill at the same time each day.
- If taken properly, the chance of pregnancy is <1%.
- Disadvantage: hormonal contraception does not protect you against sexually transmitted diseases.
- Advantages of hormonal contraception:
 - prevents pregnancy
 - regular, lighter, and less painful periods
 - decreases development of ovarian cysts, ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, pelvic infection

Risks with hormonal contraception:

- Blood clots, stroke, heart attacks
- Contraindicated in woman greater than 35 and smoke, hypertension, history of deep vein clots, Factor V Leiden mutation, strong family history of strokes, heart attacks, pulmonary embolus before age 50, clots during pregnancy or on hormones.

When do I start taking hormonal contraception?

Pill users:

- Day 1 Starter: take the first pill within the first 24 hours of onset of your period (no backup needed)
- Sunday Starter: take the first pill on the Sunday after your period starts. If your period starts on Sunday, take the first pill on the same day. (use backup method (condoms) for the first week)

NuvaRing users:

- Place NuvaRing vaginally within first week of your period. Remove ring at end of 3 weeks. Period should come within 2-3 days of removal. Replace with new ring at end of 1 week.

Patch users:

- Place patch on arm, shoulder, lower belly, buttock. Never place patch on breast. Make sure skin is clean and free of substance that will not allow adhesion of patch. If patch is not sticking well, you are not protected. Change patch weekly for 3 weeks. During 4th patch-free week, you will have your period.

How do I take the pill?

- Take one pill at the same time every day.
- Do not skip any pills.
- Continue taking the pill every day despite nausea or breakthrough bleeding. These symptoms will improve the longer you take them.

What do I do if I miss any pills?

- If you miss one "active" pill, take it as soon as you remember. Then take the next pill at your regular time. This means 2 pills in one day. No backup is necessary.
- If you miss two "active" pills in a row during Week 1 or Week 2, take two pills on the day you remember, then two pills the next day, then one pill a day until you finish the pack. You must use backup method during the 7 days after you missed the pills.
- If you miss two "active" pills in a row during Week 3 OR if you miss 3 or more active pills in a row anywhere in the first 3 weeks of your pack, then:
 - Day 1 Starter: throw out rest of pills and start a new pack
 - Sunday Starter: take one pill every day until Sunday. On Sunday, throw out remaining placebo pills and start a new pack of pills. You may not have your period this month. This is expected. However, if you miss your period for 2 months, check a urine pregnancy test.
 - Use backup method for 7 days after you missed the pills.
 - If you miss any of the placebo pills, throw away the pills you missed and keep taking one pill each day until the pack is empty.

Side Effects:

Most common side effects occur during the first 3 months of starting the pill. These include:

- irregular bleeding (use back up method and keep a menstrual calendar)
- upset stomach or nausea (try taking pill at night)
- weight gain due to increased appetite
- mood swings
- breast tenderness or swelling
- headaches

If these symptoms continue beyond 3 months, please make an appointment to discuss changing your hormonal contraception method.

Medications that can decrease the efficacy of hormonal contraception (ie. USE BACKUP METHOD!)

- Antibiotics, seizure medications, sedatives and hypnotics (benzodiazepines)

Future Fertility:

Allow 1-3 normal cycles to pass before actively trying to conceive. Start prenatal vitamins containing at least 400 mcg of Folic Acid.