



BIRTH CONTROL PILL

What is the birth control pill?

The birth control pill is a medication taken by mouth at the same time every day to prevent pregnancy. It contains two types of hormones normally found in your body - estrogen and progestin. The birth control pill is 91% effective with typical use.

How does the birth control pill work?

The birth control pill prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg each month (ovulation). If there is no egg to meet the sperm, pregnancy will not occur. It also changes the lining of the uterus making it difficult for an egg to attach itself. Finally, the pill changes the mucus in the cervix making it harder for sperm to enter the uterus.

Who can use the birth control pill?

Anyone seeking a reliable and reversible method of birth control. It is important to consult a health care provider, as the birth control pill should not be taken if you have certain health conditions.

How do I use the birth control pill?

Begin taking the birth control pill on the first day of your period or on the Sunday following the first day of your period. You must take the pill around the same time each day to avoid pregnancy. Try to take the pill with a scheduled daily activity such as a shower or breakfast.

- **28-day packs:** Take one pill every day for 28 days. The first 21 days will consist of hormone pills. The last 7 days are inactive pills (hormone-free). Your period should begin while taking the 7 days of inactive pills. Start a new pack after completing the previous one, even if you are still having your period.
- **21-day packs:** Take one pill every day for 21 days. Stop taking the birth control pill for 7 days, your period should begin during this week. Start a new pack of pills after the seven-day break, even if you are still having your period.

Backup for 7 days

It takes 7 days for the birth control pill to start taking effect and prevent a pregnancy. Use a back-up method of birth control during this time to prevent a pregnancy, such as condoms or abstinence. If this is the first time you start taking the birth control pill, it is best to use a back-up method for the first month, as you adjust to the routine of taking a pill every day.

Advantages, side effects and possible complications of the birth control pill

Advantages:

- Decreases menstrual cramping and bleeding
- Improves your cycle control
- Reduces the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer
- Can reduce acne

Possible side effects:

Not everyone experiences side effects when starting birth control. If you do, they will likely resolve within the first three months. If you are experiencing side effects and are considering stopping birth control, consult your health care provider to explore other options:

- Irregular bleeding (bleeding in between your periods)
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Sore breasts
- Mood changes
- Water retention

Possible complications:

If you have any of these symptoms while on the birth control pill, you should go to the hospital immediately:

- **Abdominal pain:** severe pain or lump in the abdomen
- **Chest pain or shortness of breath**
- **Headache:** severe with dizziness, weakness or numbness
- **Eye problems:** vision loss, blurred vision or speech problems
- **Severe leg pain or numbness:** calf or thigh

Remember:

- The pill does not protect you against sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs) including HIV; use condoms to lower your risk.
- If you are taking medications such as antibiotics or street drugs, verify with your health care provider before starting birth control.
- If you have any vomiting or diarrhea, continue to take the pill but use a backup method of birth control (such as condoms) for the rest of the cycle.

I forgot my pill. What should I do?

Which week of your cycle did you forget to take the pill?

Week 1	Week 1	Week 2 or 3	Week 2 or 3	Week 4
You took your last pill less than 2 days (48h) ago ↓	You took your last pill more than 2 days (48h) ago ↓	You forgot one or two pills. ↓	You forgot three or more pills. ↓	You missed any number of placebo pill. ↓
Your contraception is still effective ✓ ↓	Your contraception may <u>not</u> be effective X ↓	Your contraception may <u>not</u> be effective X ↓	Your contraception may <u>not</u> be effective X ↓	Your contraception is still effective ✓ ↓
Take one pill as soon as possible Continue with the rest of your pack as usual. This means you may be taking two pills in one day.	Step 1: Take one pill as soon as possible. Step 2: If you had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, you can use emergency contraception. Step 3: Use back-up method such as condoms for the next 7 days.	Take one pill as soon as possible. Continue with the rest of your pack until the end of week 3. DO NOT take the placebo pills of week 4; instead, you will begin a new pack of pills.	Step 1: Take one pill as soon as possible. Continue with the rest of your pack until the end of week 3. DO NOT take the placebo pills of week 4; instead, you will begin a new pack of pills. Step 2: If you had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, you can use emergency contraception. Step 3: Use back-up method such as condoms for the next 7 days.	Any pills in the fourth week is a placebo pill (hormone-free pills). The pills will help you maintain a routine. Discard the missed pill and continue your contraceptive cycle as normal.

Call the **Sexual Health Infoline Ontario** at 1-800-668-2437 if you have questions or need help.

For more information on the birth control pill, please consult this website:

www.sexandu.ca

Sexual Health Clinic

179 Clarence St,

Ottawa. ON K1N5P7

613-234-4641 | TTY: 613-580-9656

OttawaPublicHealth.ca