



## ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

Standard oral contraceptives have two hormones in order to mimic the natural menstrual cycle. As such, there are three weeks of “active” pills and one week of sugar/placebo pills. Approximately three days into the sugar pill week, you should have a menstrual period. Because the pills are divided into 28 day cycles, your menses should always come on the same day of the week. This is nice for predicting your period. Many women will suffer from mild nausea, headache and breast tenderness with the start of oral contraceptives. These symptoms usually resolve after about three packages (three months) of the pills, some irregular spotting may take six months to resolve. If the symptoms are more than you can bear, please call the office to try another brand of pill rather than just quitting the pill. Most times we can overlap pills to help your symptoms and still keep you from getting pregnant.

You may start your contraceptives on the first day of bleeding in your menstrual period or on the Sunday following the start of your period (if your period starts on a Sunday, take the pills on this Sunday). Each pill pack has a way to monitor the day of the week so that you may keep track of which pill to take on a specific day. Some pills come in a variety of doses and taking the correct pill is very important. For those pills that are all the same dose each and every day, it is easier to correct a mistake. The daily calendar is your reminder that you have not missed any pills.

### TAKING PILLS:

Take one pill every day, the same time every day (within 2 hours of your selected time).

Put your pills with your toothbrush or your hairbrush; something that you use at approximately the same time every day to help you remember to take your pills.

Start taking your pills either with the first day of your menstrual flow or the Sunday following the first day of your period. If your period starts on a Sunday, start your pills this day. Remember to set the day dial or place the day sticker on your pills when you open a new pack, do not trust your memory to keep track of your pills.

You may have some nausea with the first three packs of pills, generally this is very mild. Try taking your pills with food or at night to decrease the nausea. If you are actually vomiting after taking the pills, you are probably not going to have kept down enough of the pills to protect you from becoming pregnant. You should contact your doctor for instructions and a possible change of pills. Use condoms for protection until the problem is resolved.

If you have started your pills as instructed above, you need to use condoms for the first package of pills. If this is not a long term relationship, you should continue to use condoms. Only condoms protect from infections, pills do not!

### MISSED PILLS:

If you should forget to take your pill at the scheduled time that you have set for yourself, take it as soon as you remember on that same day. If this has only happened once during the current package of pills, your protection should not be interrupted. If you do not realize that you have missed a pill until the next day, take both pills - one in the morning, one in the evening. Take your next pill as scheduled. You are still protected from getting pregnant if this has not happened more than once during this package. If you should miss **two** consecutive pills, double up for two days. Do not miss any more pills this pack and use condoms for the rest of the pack. You may have bleeding any time you miss pills, but your menses should still come at the expected time. If you miss **three** pills, stop your pills, throw the pack away. You will have a period within 7 days of stopping the pills. Then restart the pills with the first day of the new menstrual period or the following Sunday. Use condoms for three weeks while your cycle is being re-established.

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## **NORMAL SIDE EFFECTS:**

- Nausea
- Breast tenderness
- Leg cramping
- Headache
- Moodiness
- Break through spotting or bleeding - Most resolve with time (3-6 months)
- Change in quantity of vaginal discharge/mucus
- Shorter and/or lighter menstrual periods
- Reduction in menstrual cramps

## **ADVERSE REACTIONS/CALL THE OFFICE WITH THESE:**

- Uncontrolled vomiting
- Severe pain in one calf
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Visual loss or disturbance in clarity of vision
- Blinding headache not resolved with Tylenol

\*\*Certain **antibiotics** may decrease the pill's effectiveness. Use condom back up whenever being treated with antibiotics. Do not smoke if you take pills.