



Oral Contraceptive Handout



PLEASE SAVE FOR REFERENCE.

THE NAME OF YOUR BIRTH CONTROL PILL IS

Your birth control pills contain estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen is the hormone that prevents shedding of the uterine lining (bleeding). Progesterone is the hormone that provides the birth control. Pill works primarily by preventing ovulation.

OTHER BENEFITS OF ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES:

- regular menstrual periods
- less cramping
- reduced menstrual flow
- improvement of acne
- less anemia
- decreased incidence of functional ovarian cysts
- decreased incidence of ectopic (tubal) pregnancy.
- significant protection from ovarian and endometrial (uterine lining) cancers
- decreased incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease
- decreased incidence of non-cancerous breast problems.

STARTING YOUR FIRST CYCLE

"SUNDAY START"

Take the first pill in your first pack on the Sunday of your period. If your period starts on a Sunday take your first pill that same day. If your period starts on M-T-W-Th-Fri or Sat take your pill on the first Sunday that you come to (whether you are bleeding or not). You then take one pill each day for 28 days. When you have taken all 28 pills, you go immediately to the first pill in your next package and continue as before. ONLY the first pill of the first package is based on when your period starts. You are protected from pregnancy after you have taken 7 pills correctly, but we recommend using a back-up method for at least one month, until you are in the habit of taking your pills correctly.

"FIRST DAY START"

Take your first pill of your first package on the day your next period starts. You then take one pill a day until you have finished all the pills in the pack. Place the "day label", from the package that your pills came in, on your pill pack. Place the "day label" on every pill pack as you open it. When you have taken all 28 pills you go immediately to the first pill in your next pack and continue as before. Only the first pill of the first pack is based on when your period starts. You are protected from pregnancy beginning the first day of your first pack, but we recommend using a back-up method for at least one month, until you are in the habit of taking your pills correctly.

"QUICKSTART"

Take your first pill the day recommended by your practitioner. You are protected from pregnancy after you have taken 7 pills correctly, but we recommend using a back-up method for at least a month, until you are in the habit of taking your pills correctly.

The first 21 pills are the "active hormone pills" and must be taken at the same time each day. The remaining 7 pills are "reminder pills" to remind you to start a new pack of pills on the correct day. Sometime during these 7 days, you will have your "period". You are protected from pregnancy every day, if pills

are taken correctly. You are protected during the reminder pill week as well. **Mircette has only 2 "reminder pills" and 5 pills that have some hormone. They are to shorten the period flow. You should take the five yellow pills.

Take one pill at the same time each day; associate it with a meal, brushing teeth or some other regular daily activity. Just find the best time for YOU! It is very important to take your pill at the same time every day for at least two reasons:

1. Proper contraceptive protection
2. Breakthrough bleeding can occur when you take pills irregularly.

Extended Cycling

(Skipping periods) This is possible if you are on a monophasic pill (the pill is the same dose each day, ie. All active pills are identical). See your practitioner for instructions on how to do this. NOTE: If you are on a triphasic pill (active pills change color or shape) your period probably will still come if you try to skip it. If you desire to skip your period, please discuss with your provider.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POSSIBLE SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS:

The serious side effects from birth control pills are related to blood clots, which can occur anywhere in your circulatory system. Heart attack, stroke, pulmonary embolism, and deep vein blood clots in your leg are SERIOUS side effects. These occur infrequently. The high risk group are women who are over 35 years old, who are obese or who smoke cigarettes, but these side effects CAN happen to young women.

The SYMPTOMS of possible serious side effect include: "ACHES"

- A=severe abdominal pain
- C=severe chest pain, and shortness of breath
- H=severe headache
- E=eye problems (loss of vision, flashing lights, etc)
- S=severe pain in the calf or thigh

Severe pain anywhere should make you seek medical care. If you have any of these symptoms you should not take another pill and contact Women's Health at 862-1806. When Health Services is closed call 862-1530 and choose the option on the menu to talk to the nurse at the emergency room at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital or your own health care provider.

POSSIBLE NUISANCE SIDE EFFECTS INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

NAUSEA: Nausea can usually be eliminated by taking your pill with food and by having a snack 4-6 hours after taking your pill. For some it works well to take the pill at bedtime, then the nausea occurs while you are sleeping.

BREAKTHROUGH BLEEDING: Breakthrough bleeding is when you have bleeding or spotting when you are taking your "active" (hormone) pills. If this occurs for 2-3 months and you have been taking your pills correctly, you should make an appointment for a pill follow-up and possible change of pill. If the bleeding is heavy, call and schedule a "pill follow-up" appointment.

BREAST CHANGES: If you have breast enlargement and/or tenderness that lasts 2-3 cycles you may need a pill change. If you have breast enlargement and this is not a problem for you then nothing needs to be changed.



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WEIGHT: A weight gain **is not expected** when you begin oral contraceptives, but may occur for some women on some pills. A gain of 10lbs or more will require an appointment and possible pill change. A gain of 3-5 lbs. is not medically significant.

MOOD CHANGES: Feeling tired, minor headaches, or malaise (feeling "blah") can be minimized by taking Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) 50-150mg every day. Try the B6 for 2 months to see if it will be effective. B6 is very inexpensive and is available at supermarkets, pharmacies and health food stores. Excess is excreted in the urine, which will be bright yellow in color.

DEPRESSION: If you become depressed or depression increases with oral contraceptives discuss with your provider (or another Women's Health staff member) as soon as possible.

OTHER NUISANCE SIDE EFFECTS: If you experience other nuisance side effects that do not go away after several cycles call and make an appointment with your provider to discuss the problem.

Most NUISANCE side effects will disappear after 2-3 cycles of use. If you are experiencing NUISANCE side effects, do not stop taking your pills mid-cycle (during the active hormone pills), call us at 862-1806. If you are not at school, call your own health care provider, Planned Parenthood or a family planning clinic for advice. Please keep track of when in your pill pack the side effects occur.

Always try the pill prescribed for you for 2-3 cycles (packs) unless you are experiencing a sign or symptoms of a SERIOUS side effect or you are experiencing a problem that you cannot tolerate for 2-3 cycles.

If you vomit a pill within 2 hours of taking it, take another pill of the same color. It is a good idea to have an "extra" pack of pills on hand for just this reason.

If you have vomiting or diarrhea for more than one day, continue your pills and use backup contraception (condoms) or abstain for 2 weeks after the illness has passed. You may not be protected.

If you miss any of your pills, please refer to the pill pack insert or follow the attached flow chart for missed pills.

If you miss a period on the pill and have taken all of your pills correctly, the likely hood of being pregnant is very small, continue taking your pills. If you are uncomfortable with this call us at 862-1806. Ideally you should wait and see if you miss a second period. If you do, call. We will do a pregnancy test and discuss changing your pills.

FYI:

- Birth control pills are a medication and all of your health care providers need to know that you are on the pill.
- Some drugs/medications may interfere with the effectiveness of your birth control pills. Always ask your health care provider and or your

pharmacist about medications that you are taking. There are no known non-prescription medications that affect birth control pills. However, there is some thought that St. John's Wort may cause combination contraceptive to be less effective.

- Always check the expiration date on your pill pack. The pills do not expire until the end of the month listed.
- Most women can be on the pill indefinitely.
- There is no need to take rest periods or breaks from birth control pills unless advised by your health care provider.
- Birth control pills do not cause infertility.
- A woman's annual health exam is the same as a "physical."
- If you have any doubt you're "protected" from pregnancy, assume that you are not protected, abstain or use back up contraception and call for advice.

REMEMBER THAT BIRTH CONTROL PILLS DO NOT PROTECT YOU FROM SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES. ONLY CONDOMS CAN HELP PROTECT YOU FROM SOME SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES.

If you are having difficulty adjusting to birth control pills, please contact your own health care provider or us. A pill change may solve your problem. If you decide to discontinue pills, please make an appointment to discuss an alternative method of birth control. Try to continue the pills in your current pack until your appointment.

ECPs' (morning after pills) are available at Health Services whenever Health Services is open. ECP can be taken up to 5 days. Statistics are much better if taken within 24 hours. Please call and be seen as soon as possible.

Remember, Health Services is open on weekends 12-4. Call 862-1806 to schedule an appointment.

_____ Cycles (packs of 28 pills) have been ordered in the Health Services pharmacy for you now. Before you can purchase more you will need an appointment for a "Pill Follow Up." At that time you will have a blood pressure check, your weight checked and discuss with your health care provider any concerns you may have. You will have enough pill packs ordered for you to carry you to your next exam. You can then go directly to the pharmacy to purchase them without an appointment. Your next annual physical exam will be due _____, and at that time your prescription will be renewed for the next year.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SPEAK WITH A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM AT 862-1806. PHARMACY REFILL 862-1094

NOTE: the pharmacy is NOT open during breaks and the summer, so plan your purchases to cover those time periods. Always count the number of weeks you'll be gone, not the months, and buy enough packs to cover them, plus one extra.



HEALTH SERVICES

(603)862-2856 (during hours of operation)|(603) 862-1530 (after hours)

www.unh.edu/health-services

Flow Chart for missed ACTIVE oral contraceptive pills

Missed 1 pill	Take as soon as possible. Take next pill at regular time.	No back-up method is needed.
Missed 2 pills during weeks 1 or 2	Take 2 pills a day for 2 days at least 6 hours apart with food (if queasy) and finish pack.	Use back-up method for the next 7 consecutive days.
Missed 2 pills During Week 3	Sunday Starter	Take 1 pill everyday till Sunday. Start NEW pack on Sunday. Use back-up method for next 7 consecutive days.
Day 1 starter	Stop using rest of pack. Start NEW pack same day.	Use back-up method for next 7 consecutive days.
Missed 3 or more pills	Sunday Starter	Take 1 pill every day till Sunday. Start NEW pack on Sunday If unprotected intercourse consult with your health care provider
Day 1 Starter	Stop using rest of pack. Start New pack on same day.	Use back up method for next 7 consecutive days If unprotected intercourse consult with your health care provider

***Save partially used packs for spare until they expire, then throw unused pills away.**