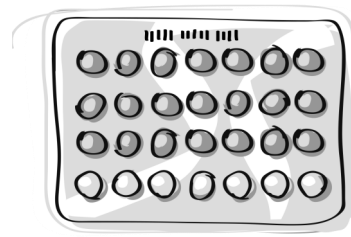




The Pill



The Contraceptive Pill is a safe and effective way to prevent pregnancy, but it doesn't protect you against STIs. Use a condom along with the pill to protect yourself and your partner(s).

How does the pill work?

Combination Pill

Most oral contraceptive pills contain two types of hormones (estrogen and progestin), preventing pregnancy. Pill packs come in 21 or 28 pills and many different brands, each with different hormone strengths. You will need to remember to take your pill at the same time every day.

21-day packs - You take one pill at the same time each day for three weeks in a row. No pills are taken in the fourth week (this is when most people get their period). After one pill-free week, you start a new 21-day pack.

28-day packs - When you finish one pack, you start a new pack right away. The seven extra pills in a 28-day pack are reminder pills that don't contain any hormones (they are only there to help you stay on track). Most people will get their period in the last week of a 28-day pill pack.

Some brands of oral contraceptive pills can be taken continuously (with no week off) to avoid or delay your period. They don't all work this way, so check with your health care provider before you try.

Progestin-Only Pills

Progestin-Only (Mini Pills) can be used by people who can't take estrogen. Progestin-only pills come in 28-day packs and all 28 pills contain the hormone progestin, preventing pregnancy.



As long as you take it correctly, the pill will prevent pregnancy for the entire month (even during the fourth week).



The pill is highly effective and reversible (not permanent).

It prevents pregnancy by:

- Preventing your ovaries from releasing an egg (pregnancy can't happen if the egg and sperm don't meet).
- Changing the lining of your uterus (endometrium), making it harder for a fertilized egg to implant.
- Changing your cervical mucus, making it harder for sperm to get to the egg.

How do I get started on the pill?

You can start using the pill at any time. Depending on which day in your menstrual cycle you start, and on which pill you choose, it can take up to 7 days before the pill is effective in preventing pregnancy.

You'll need to use condoms until the pill has been in your body long enough to prevent pregnancy.



Sticking to a schedule keeps the right level of hormones in your body to prevent pregnancy.

To be most effective, it's important that you take the pill at the same time each day. It can be 99.7% effective when taken perfectly, but most people aren't perfect. With typical use the pill is about

91% Effective

Meaning 90 out of 1000 people using the pill typically will get pregnant in a year.



Effectiveness of the pill can be reduced by certain medications. If you are unsure about a possible interaction between your medications, talk with your health care provider.

Vomiting or diarrhea can keep the pill from working properly. If it happens, use a condom as a back-up method to prevent pregnancy and talk with your health care provider about how long you will need to use condoms.




The pill may be less effective for people with a high BMI (Body Mass Index). If you're concerned about how the pill will work in your body, ask your health care provider.



What if I miss a pill?

The pill works best when you take it at the same time every day. Forgetting to take the pill on time is the most common reason the contraception pill fails, resulting in an unplanned pregnancy. What to do when you forget your pill depends a lot on which kind you take, combination pills (with both estrogen and progestin) or progestin-only pills. If you're not sure which one you're on, ask your health care provider.

If you miss your combination pill (estrogen & progestin)

Week 1 of Pill Pack 		
Missed one Pill (less than 24 hours since I should have taken it)	Take the missed pill now. Take the rest of your pills at the regular time (even if you end up taking 2 pills today)	You are protected against pregnancy.
Missed 2 or more Pills in a row	Take the most recent missed pill now. Throw away the other missed pills. Keep taking the rest of the pills in the pack (even if you end up taking 2 pills today)	Use condoms for 7 days to prevent pregnancy. Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) is a good option if you have had sex without a condom in the last 5 days.
Week 2 or 3 of Pill Pack 		
Missed 1 or 2 pills in a row	Take the most recent missed pill now. Throw away the other missed pills. Keep taking the rest of the pills in your pack (even if you end up taking 2 pills today) As soon as your pack is done, start a new pack right away (skip the reminder pills if you use 28 day packs, skip the pill-free week if you use a 21 day pack)	You are protected against pregnancy.
Missed 3 or more pills in a row	Take the most recent missed pill now. Throw away the other missed pills. Keep taking the rest of the pills in the pack (even if you end up taking 2 pills today) As soon as your pack is done, start a new pack right away (skip the reminder pills if you use 28 day packs, skip the pill-free week if you use a 21 day pack)	Use condoms for 7 days to prevent pregnancy. Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) is a good option if you have had sex without a condom in the last 5 days.
Week 4 of Pill Pack 		
Missed reminder pills (only in 28 day pack)	Take the rest of the reminder pills at the regular times	You are still protected against pregnancy. The last 7 pills in a 28 day pack are only reminder pills anyway. They have no hormones.

If you miss your Progestin-Only Pill

There is a risk of pregnancy if the Progestin-only Pill (Mini Pill) is taken as little as three hours late. If you forgot to take your Mini Pill:			
 Take the missed pill now	 Take the next pill at the regular time (even if it means taking two pills today)	 Take the rest of the pills in your pack at the regular times	 Use condoms for 48 hours
Emergency Contraception is a good option to prevent pregnancy if you had sex without a condom in the last five days before you realized that you had missed your birth control pill.			

If there is a possibility you may have become pregnant, you should take a pregnancy test before starting a new month of the pill. If you still aren't sure what to do, ask your health care provider or visit www.sexlifescask.ca for more information.

Are there side effects from the pill?

Some side effects from the pill are more desirable than others. Many of the less desirable ones often get better after you have been on the pill for a few months. Side effects can include: more regular periods, less menstrual flow and cramping, less acne, reduced risk of endometrial and ovarian cancer, weakening of bones (decreased bone density which may return to normal when you stop taking the pill), irregular bleeding, headaches, bloating, breast tenderness, nausea (it can help to take the pill at bedtime), higher risk of blood clots.

Some side effects can be warning signs of something more serious. If you have any of the following symptoms, let your health care provider know as soon as possible: a new lump in your breast, sudden severe headache, soreness in your leg, severe chest or stomach pain, missing a period if you have always been regular, yellow eyes.

Who should NOT take the pill?

The oral contraceptive pill is very safe for most people. Some health conditions can increase the risk of serious side effects. Check with your health care provider before taking the contraceptive pill if you are a smoker over 35 years old or have existing health conditions.

IS THE PILL RIGHT FOR YOU?

It's important that your contraception method is right for you. If you're having trouble remembering to take the pill on time or you're struggling with side effects, there are lots of other great contraception options that might be a better fit for you.

Injection



IUD



Patch



Ring



To find out more about contraception or other areas of your sexual health, explore . . .

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