

How it works

The pill contains hormones (estrogen and progesterone) that stop eggs from leaving the ovary. They also make the mucus at the cervix (the opening of the uterus) thick, preventing sperm from entering the uterus to fertilize an egg.

Pills are taken by mouth every day.

The pill pack contains 21 “active” pills that contain hormones and 7 “reminder” pills that are taken during the fourth week—that’s 28 pills in a pack.

Your bleeding comes some time while you are taking the 7 “reminder” pills.

A new pack of pills is started the day after the last reminder pill is taken.

Pills **do not** protect against sexually transmitted infections.

To learn more, read the paper insert that comes with your pill pack.

Benefits

- 97-99% effective in preventing pregnancy
- Regular periods
- Lighter, shorter periods and less cramping
- Less acne
- Decreased risk of ovarian cancer and cancer of the lining of the uterus
- Some protection against pelvic inflammatory disease

Side effects

Vary from brand of pill to brand of pill and also vary from person to person

The following effects might occur in the first 3 months of use and include: nausea, bloated feeling, spotting between periods, tender breasts, mood changes and headaches. Check in with the clinic if these things are lasting longer than 3 months or are bad enough to make you think about quitting the pill.

Come to the clinic as soon as possible if you experience any of the following rare but serious side effects: sudden severe headache, sudden complete or partial loss of vision, sharp pains in the chest, abdomen or legs, swelling or pain in your legs, unexplained changes in mood.

Getting started

Sunday start: take the first “active” pill on the Sunday **after** your period starts even if you are still bleeding. If your period starts on Sunday start your pills that day. Use condoms for the first 7 days of this very first pack.

Day one start: take the first “active” pill on the day your period starts. You will need to re-label your pack (it is set up to be used for a Sunday start) with the package’s enclosed labels...the staff will show you how to do this. Use condoms for the first 7 days of this very first pack.

Quick start: this is not for everyone but for those who are anxious to get started you take the first “active” pill on the day you are in the clinic and follow the instruction under day one start about re-labeling your pack. You should have a pregnancy test done 2 weeks after the quick start. Use condoms for the first 7 days of the very first pack.

Remember: take one pill a day at the same time every day. Do not skip pills or take pills out of order even if you are bleeding, feel sick to your stomach, or do not have sex very often. When you finish your “reminder” pills start a new pack the next day. Do not wait.

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What if I miss a pill?

Completely missing a pill, or even taking a pill as much as 12 hours late, may decrease your protection against pregnancy. Use back-up birth control; condoms for 7 days or not having sex for 7 days.

Always take your pill as soon as you remember it...do not wait. Take your next pill at the regular time. This means you might take 2 pills on the same day. Remember to use back-up birth control for 7 days if you have to take 2 pills at the same time.

If you **miss 2 “active” pills in week 1 or 2**: take the 2 pills on the day you remember and 2 pills the next day. Then take 1 pill a day until you finish the pack. Remember to use back-up birth control for 7 days.

If you **miss 2 “active” pills in a row during week 3**: finish the rest of the “active” pills but **DO NOT** take the “reminder” pills. Start taking a new pack of pills after you take your last “active” pill in your current pack. You may not have a period until the end of this next pack of pills, but missing a period does you no harm. Use back-up birth control for 7 days.

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If you **miss 3 or more pills in a row** or are **missing pills frequently** come in and talk to the clinic staff and bring your pill pack along with you.

You should continue to take one pill a day and should use condoms or not have sex until you have talked to the clinic staff.

Remember you might need to take **emergency contraception** if you forget pills and do not use back-up birth control. Talk to the clinic staff if this happens to you.

Minneapolis School Based Clinics

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The Pill