

What YOU need to know about oral contraceptives?



Oral contraceptives

What It Does

- Prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation, altering the lining of the uterus, & thickening the mucus in the cervix so that sperm can not easily pass through

What It Does NOT Do

- Protect against sexually transmitted infections
- Keep using condoms to protect yourself

Health Benefits

- Lighter, shorter periods
- More regular, less painful periods
- Decrease risk of ovarian cysts
- Helps to protect against ovarian and endometrial cancer

Types

- Monophasic – constant dose of estrogen & progestin, least likely to cause side effects such as mood changes because of the uniform hormone level, cause less spotting when skipping placebo week & beginning a new pack
- Triphasic – gradually increase the dose of estrogen during the cycle, thought to better match the body's natural menstrual cycle, less overall hormone dosage than monophasics

Side Effects

- Nausea
- Breast Tenderness/Enlargement
- Bloating
- Headaches, Mood Swings
- Spotting
- Increased Vaginal Discharge

These usually subside after the first few months. This is your body getting used to the pill.

When You Begin

- Take the 1st tablet in the pack on the 1st Sunday following the beginning of your period. If your period starts on a Sunday, begin taking your pills that day.
- Take the pill at the same time each day (within 2 hours).
- Once you begin your pills, make sure you are using a back-up birth control method for AT LEAST the 1st 7 days preferably for the entire 1st pack of pills.

If You Miss A Pill

- 1 pill – Take the missed pill as soon as you remember and then get back on schedule
- 2 pills – Take 2 pills on the day you remember and on the next day take 2 pills, the following day you should be back on schedule, use a backup birth control method (condom) for the next 7 days
- 3 pills – Call the Health Center
- You may experience some spotting, nausea, and headache during this time.

If You Are On Other Meds

- Certain drugs & herbal supplements (St. John's Wort) can decrease the effectiveness by reducing the amount of birth control hormones in your system resulting in pregnancy
- Ask your pharmacist when a new medication is ordered and to be cautious, use a back-up birth control method.

Stop If...ACHES

- Abdominal pain (severe)
- Chest pain (severe), cough, short of breath
- Headaches (severe), dizziness, weakness, numbness
- Eye problems (vision loss/blurry vision), speech problems
- Severe leg pain (calf/thigh)

Smoking increases the risk of dangerous side effects!

If you have any questions, please call the University Health Center at 540-568-6178