Instructions for Birth Control Pill Use

The birth control pill works primarily by blocking ovulation (release of an egg). If there is no egg to meet the sperm, pregnancy cannot occur. The pill also works by making cervical mucous thick and un receptive to sperm, slowing tubal function which has to move the egg down the tube to meet the sperm, and by making the lining of the endometrium un receptive to implantation of a fertilized egg should one get as far as the uterus.

For women who follow these directions carefully, the pill is the most effective reversible contraceptive currently available.

Starting birth control pills for the first time

1. Choose a backup method of birth control (such as condoms, diaphragm, or foam) to use with your first pack of pills as described below because the pill may not fully protect you from pregnancy during the first week that you start taking them depending when you start. Keep this backup method handy and use it in case you:
   - Run out of pills
   - Forget to take your pill
   - Discontinue pill use
   - Need protection form transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly the virus that causes AIDS (the condom is recommended)

2. There are several ways to start taking your pills. Use one of the following approaches:
   - First start: Start your first pack of pills on the day your period begins.
     - No back-up method required.
   - Sunday start: Start your first pack on the first Sunday after your period begins. This will result in your menses almost always beginning on a Tuesday or Wednesday every 4 weeks.
     - You need a back-up method x 7 days.
   - Quick start: Start immediately if pregnancy excluded.
     - Back-up method x 7 days.

3. Take one pill a day until you finish the pack. Then:
   - If you are using a 28-day pack, begin a new pack immediately. Skip no days between packages.
   - If you are using a 21-day pack, stop taking pills for 1 week and then start your new pack.

4. Try to associate taking your pill with something you do at about the same time every day, like brushing your teeth in the morning, eating a meal, or going to bed. Keep the pill near the place where you engage in the selected activity. Establishing a routine will make it easier for you to remember. The pills work best if you take one at about the same time every day. Check your pack of pills each morning to make sure you took your pill the day before.

Continuing on the Pills ~ What If…
1. If you have bleeding between periods,
   - This is a very common side effect of birth control pills for the first 3 months. Spotting (light bleeding between periods) can also occur if you miss a pill. Call the doctor’s office for advice if bleeding is heavier than 1 pad an hour or the bleeding between periods last for more than 3 months.

2. If you have nausea or Vomiting,
   - Nausea and vomiting may occur during the first few months of taking birth control pills. Sometimes by changing the time of day when you take the pill will help. Try switching to dinner time or before bed. If you had episodes of vomiting within 2 hours of taking your pill it may not have been absorbed so use back up contraception for the rest of the cycle. Contact your doctor's office if you have persistent nausea or vomiting.

3. If you miss your period,
   - It is not uncommon for your periods to become lighter while taking birth control pills or miss your period all together. If you have missed any pills in the pack prior to this occurring you should check a home pregnancy test prior to starting a new pack.

4. If you forget your pills for a day or two, follow the instructions below:
   - If you miss a pill, take the forgotten one (yesterday’s pill) as soon as you remember it and take today’s pill at the regular time. Although you probably will not become pregnant, use your backup method until your next period to be safe.
   - If you miss two pills in a row, take two pills as soon as you remember and two pills the next day. You may have some spotting. If you miss one pill, take the forgotten one (yesterday’s pill) as soon as you remember it and take today’s pill at the regular time use your backup method until your next period to be sage.
   - If you miss three or more pills in a row do not take all 3 pills at once. If you are in the third week of pills, finish the pack and skip the inactive pills and start a new pack. Start your backup method of birth control immediately. If you have had intercourse you need to take Emergency Contraception. You are at risk for becoming pregnant if you do not use back up contraception or emergency contraception.

   **Remember, missed pills may cause you to start spotting or bleeding and this may last up to 7 days.**

5. If you experience breast soreness, mild headaches, mild edema (swelling)
   - These symptoms are usually mild and will improve after being on the pill for 3 or more months. If any of these symptoms are severe or persist more than 3 months you should contact our office.

6. If you experience mood swings or changes
   - Usually, after you adjust to the hormones these symptoms will improve. If at any time these symptoms are severe or persistent you should contact our office. If you find that these symptoms are on the days when they are not taking the active hormone pills please call our office since we can make a change in how you are taking the pills.

7. If your doctor has you on continuous pills (21 days of active pills followed by 21 days of active pills with no 7 day break of non-hormone, inactive pills) in order to suppress your menses because of endometriosis or premenstrual syndrome, you will very likely have break through
bleeding. If the spotting persists through more than 3 packs of pills, contact your doctor to confirm that you should stay on that brand of pills.

8. If you need to take any other medications, including antibiotics, check with the pharmacist to see if there will be any interaction or if it will make your birth control pill less effective.

**WARNING SIGNS**

Contact the doctor immediately if any one of these danger signs (or “aches”) appears: Abdominal pain (severe)

- Chest pain (severe), cough, shortness of breath
- Headaches (severe) • Eye problems – blurred vision or vision loss
- Severe leg pain – calf or thigh
- Yellow jaundice

Learn the pill danger signs. If you smoke more than 14 cigarettes a day, you should be especially careful. You should STOP SMOKING. If you are over 35 and still smoke, you have a significantly increased chance of serious vascular problems if you also take birth control pills.