

# Information on Combined Oral Contraceptives (“The Pill”)

## *What is “The Pill”? And how does it work?*

The pill is a combination of two types of hormones, estrogen and progesterone. The pill prevents your body from releasing an egg from one of your ovaries (ovulation) each month. It regulates your hormones and prevents pregnancy. You should always use two forms of protection but this is particularly important during the first month of the pill use.

## *How Do I take it?*

Take the first pill of your package on the SUNDAY following the first day of your next period, even if you’ve stopped bleeding before that day. If your period begins on Sunday, start taking the pill on that same day.

If menstrual flow starts on:	Tablet taking begins on:
Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday	Following Sunday
Sunday	<i>that</i> Sunday

Always take the pill around the same time each day. Try to think of something you do everyday (like brushing your teeth) so that you can remember to take the pill with that

## *What should I do if I miss a pill(s)?*

**Late, same day:** Take as soon as remembered, resume normal schedule next day

**Missed 1 pill:** Double up, resume normal schedule the next day; recommend back-up method

**Missed 2 pills:** Double up for 2 days; resume normal schedule on third day; Use back-up method. Do NOT triple-up.

**Missed 3 or more pills:** Call the office.

## *What else do I need to consider?*

**STD’s:** The pill does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases and is not 100% effective in the prevention of pregnancy. We strongly recommend the use of condoms with all sexual encounters.

**Plan B:** Please call your health care provider immediately if you need emergency contraception, which prevents pregnancy when used 1-5 days after unprotected sex.

## *What are the common side-effects?*

- Mood changes/breast pain/nausea (usually resolves after 2-3 cycles)
- Breakthrough bleeding (spotting between periods, usually resolves after 2-3 cycles)
- Changes in skin (darkening, oiliness, rash)

## *What are the risks?*

The pill has some rare, but serious side-effects:

- Blood clots
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- High blood pressure

Your doctor will review your individual risk profile taking into consideration family history. In healthy young women, these serious side-effects are extremely rare.

\*\* The risk of serious problems is greater for women of all ages who smoke cigarettes.

## *What are the benefits of the Pill?*

- Less bleeding and cramping w/ periods
- Improved acne
- Decrease in iron-deficiency anemia
- Decreased symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (mood changes, breast tenderness, back pain)
- Protects against unplanned pregnancy
- Reversible (as soon as you stop taking the pill, you can become pregnant if desired)
- Lower chance of endometrial and/or

## *When should I call my doctor?*

Call if you develop any of the following:

**A** bdominal pain (severe)

**C** hest pain (severe)

**H** eadache (severe)

**E** ye problems (change in vision/blurry vision)

**S** evere leg pain

For further information, go to: <http://www.youngwomenshealth.org>