

When first starting the pill

Some people notice changes such as feeling sick (especially if the pill is taken on an empty stomach), tender breasts and unexpected vaginal bleeding. These usually improve with time.

If you are concerned about any changes, we recommend that you do not stop the pill but phone for advice.

Your period may be lighter than usual, but if you miss your period, do not stop the pill - phone for advice.

Contact a Family Planning Clinic or your doctor at once if you have

- sudden chest pain or cough up blood or become short of breath
- a painful calf (lower part of the leg)
- a severe headache which affects your vision, speech, arms or legs.

Your Health Professional

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How to take your pill: Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill Continuous Pill Taking

Start your pill on

Take one pill at the same time every day until all the hormone pills are finished

Start your next packet on

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and take all the hormone pills. Continue like this, taking all the hormone pills without a break. You should not get a withdrawal bleed.

If you want to have a withdrawal bleed:

1. Check you haven't missed any hormone pills in the last 7 days.

If you have missed one or more hormone pills, then keep taking hormone pills until you have had a hormone pill each day for 7 days.

2. Stop taking your hormone pills for 7 days.

You can stop for less than 7 days if you only want a short withdrawal bleed.

3. Start taking your hormone pills again and keep going as above.

It is important that you do NOT miss more than 7 hormone pills.

You need to start taking hormone pills after 7 days even if you are still bleeding, or you will not be protected against pregnancy.

Missed Pills

If you miss more than 8 hormone pills you need to use the 7 day rule.

If you miss one or more pills, you may get spotting or bleeding. You will be safe against getting pregnant unless you have missed more than 8 hormone pills.

What happens to the monthly withdrawal bleed?

Most women do not have a withdrawal bleed. Taking hormones continuously means there is no hormone signal to the lining of the womb to build up and then fall away in a withdrawal bleed. Some women have irregular bleeding or spotting. Many women end up with no bleed or only occasional withdrawal bleeds.

What if I get irregular bleeding or spotting?

You will still be safe from pregnancy. If the bleeding is annoying for you, have a withdrawal bleed (see above). It is important to check for other causes of bleeding such as an STI.

Is it safe to take my pills continuously without a break?

Yes. Research shows that there is little difference in medical risks or benefits of the combined pill, whether it is taken continuously or by having a 7 day break each month.

General rules for what to do if you miss pills

- If you miss one hormone pill, take it as soon as you remember, then take the next hormone pill at the usual time – this may mean taking 2 hormone pills together
- If you miss any 2 hormone pills within a week of each other, follow the 7 day rule

The 7 day rule

- You will not be safe until you have taken 7 hormone pills in a row
 - Use another method of contraception such as condoms or do not have sexual intercourse while taking the 7 hormone pills
 - If during this time a condom breaks or slips off, you will need an emergency contraceptive pill (ECP)
 - If there are less than 7 hormone pills left in the pack, finish the hormone pills and start your new pack immediately (miss the 7 inactive pills or the 7 day break)
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- If you vomit or have severe diarrhoea for more than 24 hours, you should follow the 7 day rule and miss the 7 inactive pills (or 7 day break) if necessary
 - If you take other medicine such as antibiotics, you should follow the 7 day rule while you are taking the medicine and for 7 days afterwards – you may have to miss the 7 inactive pills (or 7 day break)
 - If you miss hormone pills, you may notice you start to bleed – this can continue throughout that packet. Continue to take your pills as usual
 - If you are unsure what to do after missing one or more pills, phone for advice

These instructions have been updated according to international research (2006) but may not be the same as the instructions in your pill pack.