

# Combined Hormonal Pills

The Pill, Birth Control Pill, Combined Oral Contraceptive



## How does the combined hormonal pill work?



- The combined hormonal pill uses the **hormones progestin and estrogen** to prevent ovulation (so no egg is released for sperm to fertilize) and to thicken cervical mucus (which prevents sperm from moving into the uterus).
- There are over 70 different pill formulas/types. You may have to try a few types to find one you like.
- **There are progestin-only pills that are different from the combined hormonal pills.**
- Combined hormonal pill packs come with placebo pills in the last week, which contain no medication, for those who want a period once a month.
- The pill works for people of **all weights, all ages, and those using gender affirming hormone therapy.**

## How do you use the combined hormonal pill?

take  
daily

You need to **see a provider** (in-person or via telemedicine) to start using the pill.

You have to take a pill each day to prevent pregnancy, even if not having sex that day.

- Get a prescription for the pill from your provider to fill at the pharmacy. Swallow one pill every day. **You do not need to take the combined hormonal pill at the same time each day.**
- To skip your period, start a new pill pack when you get to the placebo pills rather than taking them. You will finish your pill supply faster so you will need to get more pills sooner.
- If it is difficult to take the pill or you are vomiting, you can talk to your provider about putting the pill in your vagina up to the cervix, like a suppository.



## Privacy and control

- A provider is needed to start and continue using the pill through ongoing prescriptions. There are also apps where you can get a prescription. You can decide to stop using the pill on your own.
- Your partner cannot see or feel the pill.
- Someone you live with or who you share insurance with may see a bill from your insurance.
- Someone may be able to find your pill pack or see you taking the pill.
- If anyone else is tracking your period, they may notice a change to your period.

## When starting the pill, will it work immediately?



When starting within 5 days of the first day of your period, it will work immediately. If you are not sure bleeding is your period, you can use a backup method for 1 week.



When starting at any other time, the pill will take 1 week to work. Use an additional contraceptive during that week.



## The pill may not be right for people who have or had

- Migraine with aura
- Clotting disorders or risk factors for blood clots
- Smoker and age 35+
- High blood pressure
- Lupus with positive or unknown antibodies
- Some bariatric surgeries that change your absorption of food
- Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease

*This is not a complete list, talk to your provider about your medical history before starting this method.*

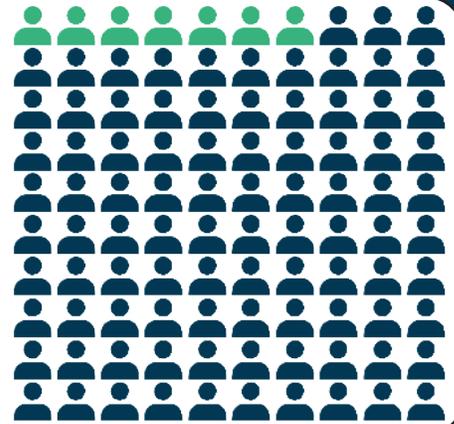


## Use emergency contraception if

- **If you miss 2+ active pills in a row**, take 2 pills as soon as you remember. You are not protected from pregnancy and should use emergency contraception if you have had sex. Use an additional method for the next 7 days.
- If you miss 1 active pill or any number of placebo pills, you are still protected and do not need emergency contraception. If you miss 1 active pill, take 2 pills the next day.

## How well does the pill prevent pregnancy?

- On average, **7 out of 100 people using the combined hormonal pill will get pregnant each year.** This means it is **93% effective** with typical use. Typical use considers how easily a person can use the pill. Some people will not be able to take the pill every day and will miss some pills.
- With perfect use, meaning the pill is taken daily, 1 out of 100 people using the combined hormonal pill will get pregnant each year. It is 99% effective.
- Some medications can make the pill not work as well.
- **You can use a non-hormonal method of contraception with the pill to provide more protection against pregnancy.**



## Side effects

*You may experience different side effects with different pill formulas. You may have to try a few different types to find one that works for you.*

**Sexually transmitted infections:** Does not prevent.

- Use external or internal condoms to lower your risk of all sexually transmitted infections.

**Period:** Can affect.

- When starting the pill, you may temporarily have spotting between periods.
- The pill may make your periods lighter.
- The pill can make periods more predictable.
- By skipping placebo pills you can skip your period. It is safe not to get your period because of the pill.

**Period cramps:** Can lessen.

**Weight:** No effect.

**Acne:** Can improve.

**Fertility return:** When you stop using the pill, you can get pregnant right away.

**Other possible side effects:**

- Breast tenderness
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Bloating
- Increased blood pressure
- Reduces symptoms of PCOS or endometriosis

**The pill helps lower risk for:** premenstrual syndrome; hot flashes (perimenopause); anemia; ovarian cancer; endometrial cancer; bone thinning; breast cysts; ovarian cysts; uterine, fallopian tube, and ovarian infection; ectopic pregnancy

## Postpartum use

The pill is **not safe to use right after giving birth.** Estrogen can increase the risk of blood clots right after delivery. At 6 weeks postpartum, the pill is safe to use and will not affect lactation, breastfeeding/chestfeeding, or infant development if breastfeeding/chestfeeding initiation has been successful.

## + Contact your provider if you have

- Abdominal pain
- Yellowing of the eyes or skin (jaundice)
- Chest pain
- Lump in breast
- Vision problems
- Seizures
- Severe headaches
- Fainting
- Leg pain/swelling

## ? Questions to ask your provider

- What if I throw up after taking the pill?
- What medications make the pill less effective?
- Which of the pill formulas is right for me?
- What if I accidentally take two pills one day?
- How do I skip my period with the pill?
- How long of a prescription can you give me?

Scan for a contraception guide and information sheets on each method.

