

FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

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Birth Control Pill Information Sheet

Birth control pills are very effective in preventing pregnancy. The pill is 95 to 99% effective. It will be the most effective if used as directed. There are different types of birth control pills. A nurse practitioner will recommend an appropriate pill for you. **Birth control pills do not protect against HIV or other sexually transmitted infections.**

Using The Pill

Start pills by taking your first tablet on the first Sunday after the beginning of your menstrual period, whether or not you are still bleeding. If your period begins on a Sunday, take your first tablet the same day. Then take one tablet everyday at the same time until you finish all of the tablets.

During the **FIRST** cycle, it is important that you use another method of birth control until you have taken a pill for two weeks.

Possible Benefits

There are possible non-contraceptive benefits of birth control pills. They could be:

- Decreased menstrual flow, shorter periods and less cramping
- Decreased risk of anemia
- Protection against ovarian and uterine lining cancer, benign breast disease and ovarian cysts
- Decreased risk of infection of pelvis (PID)
- No interference with spontaneity of intercourse
- Improvement of acne
- Regulation of irregular periods, predictable periods

Possible Serious Side Effects

Serious side effects are rare, but it is important to be aware of them. Memorize warning signs. A blood clot (or thromboembolism) in a blood vessel is 3-5 times greater for pill-users than for non-pill users. Pill users have a greater chance than non-users of developing certain serious problems that may be fatal in rare cases, including: blood clots in legs that travel to lungs, stroke, heart attack, or liver tumors. Women who are over 35 and smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day, have high blood pressure, high levels of blood cholesterol, or diabetes have a greater chance of developing serious problems. Warning signs of these serious problems could be:

- Sudden, severe headaches
- New breast lump
- Unusual swelling or pain in arm or leg
- Severe stomach or abdominal pain
- Eye problems, such as: blurred or doubled vision or loss of vision
- Severe Depression
- Numbness, tingling, or weakness on one side (arm, leg or face) of body
- Jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)
- Unusual, heavy bleeding from vagina

CALL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WITHOUT DELAY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS OR GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM IF IT IS AFTER REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS.

Pills should not be used by women who have had or develop:

- History of heart attack, stroke or heart disease
- Blood clots in the legs, lungs, or eyes
- Cancer of the breast, uterus, or liver
- Serious liver disease or liver tumor
- Known or suspect pregnancy
- Severe high blood pressure
- Diabetes with complications of the kidneys, eyes, nerves, or blood vessels
- Headaches with vision changes or aura
- Need for prolonged period of bed rest following major surgery
- An allergic reaction to any component of the pill

Other possible side effects, which are not serious, could be:

- Breast tenderness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Weight loss (rare)
- Changes in sex drive
- Mood changes
- Tan blotches on face
- Acne
- Bloating
- Spotting or bleeding between periods
- Skipped periods
- Minor headaches
- Slight weight gain

Many of these occur in the first few months, and will go away by themselves. Please call if you have any of these side effects that have not resolved after 3-4 cycles of pill use. Changing pill brand is often helpful.

Additional Information For All Pill Types

After you have finished the first pack, begin a new pack the next day.

You should plan to take the pill at the same time every day. If nausea becomes a problem, taking the pill in the evening with dinner or with a glass of milk may help.

- If you decide to plan a pregnancy, use a non-hormonal method of birth control until you have had 2 normal periods off the pill.
- If you receive medical care of any kind, tell your medical provider that you are on the pill because it is a prescription drug.
- Pills may become slightly less effective if taken with certain drugs such as some antibiotics, Rifampin for T.B. or Phenobarbital or Dilantin and other anti-seizure drugs. Certain herbals may affect your pill. Tell your health care provider what you are taking for medication or herbals.

If You Missed Any Pills

One missed pill:

- Take the missed pill as soon as you remember it.
- Take the next pill at the regular time, even if it means taking 2 pills at the same time.
- Use a back-up method for 7 days.

Two missed pills in a row:

- Take 2 pills a day (one in the morning and one at night) for 2 days.
- Use a back-up method for 7 days.
- If you had unprotected sex during this time you missed your pills, we strongly encourage you to take Emergency Contraception, EC. Make up your pills, resume your cycle, and use a back-up method for 7 days.

If you miss three or more pills:

- Call us and use an additional back-up method of birth control.
- If you had unprotected sex during this time you missed your pills, we strongly encourage you to take Emergency Contraception, EC. Make up your pills, resume your cycle, and use a back-up method for 7 days.

Remember, you are still protected from pregnancy even on your “off week” of your pill pack, providing you are taking them correctly.

Going Off The Pill

If you don't want to get pregnant when you go off the pill, you must use another birth control method immediately.

FEEL FREE TO CALL FAMILY PLANNING ANY TIME YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS.