

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES



Types:

- A. **Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill (COCP/'The Pill')**
 - Contains both Estrogen and Progestogen hormones
 - **Examples:** Yaz, Mercilon, Loette, Marvelon
- B. **Progesterone Only Pill (POP/'Mini-Pill')**
 - Contains only Progestogen hormone
 - **Examples:** Micronor, Norethindrone, Cerazette.

Disclaimer:

There are many types of oral contraceptives available, some of which are made available in government clinics and hospitals. It is important that you read carefully the drug information leaflet that is provided in the box of COCP/POP or ask your doctor or nurse should you have any questions. This patient information leaflet aims to address some common questions on oral contraceptives.

What are Oral Contraceptives (OCs) used for?

1. Prevent Pregnancy
2. Promote Regular Menstrual Bleeding

How & when does OCs work?

OCs prevents pregnancy through several ways. It prevents ovulation or the 'eggs' in your ovaries from developing. It may also prevent sperm from entering the uterus by making the mucus in your cervix thicker.

You have to take COCPs for 7 days before it is effective in preventing pregnancy. In POPs, it becomes effective after only 48 hours but it is important to take your POP pills at the same time daily.

How Effective are OCs?

85 out of 100 women who have regular sexual intercourse will get pregnant without contraception. If used correctly, oral contraceptive is one of the most effective methods of preventing pregnancy.

Can anyone use OCs?

Most women can. However, there is a small group of women who have risk factors such as heart disease, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, previous history of stroke, smokes regularly or have migraine with aura, who should consult their doctor first before taking it.

How should I start OCs?

Ideally, should be started from the 1st to 5th day of your menses. This way it offers protection from pregnancy immediately*. If you start the first pack anytime after the 5th day of your menses, additional contraception such as condoms should be used if you have sex within 7 days of starting the pill.

In the following cycles, the next pack of OC's are started on the 8th day after completing the previous 21 pill pack. There is a 7 day 'pill free' period between packs. However, if it is a 28 pill OC pack, then continue with the next pack the next day after completing the previous pack.

What are the advantages of taking OCs?

Besides being a very effective contraception, it does not affect sexual pleasure, helps regulates menses and may provide relief from painful periods. It also decreases the risk of ovarian, endometrial and colorectal cancer.

What are the side effects of OCs?

The majority of women do not have any unpleasant side effects. A small of group of women may feel nauseated or boated. Some may complain of abdominal cramps, breast tenderness, headaches or having migraine.

**Consult your doctor or nurse if your symptoms become bothersome or you experience severe numbness/pain in your limbs, slurred speech or difficulty breathing.*

Does OCs cause weight gain?

The answer is no. Research so far shows that there is no evidence of weight gain while taking OCs.

Does OCs increase the risk of Breast Cancer?

There has been no association between OCs and increased breast cancer risks in the general population. However, patients with history of breast cancer or who are genetically at risk should not take OCs.

Does OCs affect my chances of getting pregnant in the future?

The answer is no. The ability for a woman to get pregnant returns to normal once you stop taking the OCs.

* providing your normal cycle is more than 26 days

Can I take OCs while breastfeeding?

There is no conclusive evidence that OCs affect breast milk production once breastfeeding has been established. However, POPs is preferred while you are breastfeeding as it does not reduce breast milk production. It can be started from 28days or 4 weeks into your confinement. You can obtain your POPs from your clinic during your postnatal clinic visit scheduled at 4 weeks post delivery.

What if I am on other medications?

Effectiveness of OCs may be affected if you are taking other medications such as for epilepsy, HIV treatment or antibiotics. Likewise, certain medical conditions such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease and liver disease can render OCs less efficacious. So please let your doctor know if you are taking any medications concurrently or have any chronic medical condition.

What if I have vomiting or diarrhea?

Vomiting within 4 hours of consuming OCs may affect absorption and should be considered a 'missed pill'. Severe diarrhea while on OCs should also be considered as a 'missed pills'. Please refer to the 'Missed Pills' rules.

What if I am fasting?

As long as you take it at the same time then it is alright. However, if the time of consumption has to be changed significantly then calculate the time difference and follow the 'missed pills' rules.

When is the best time of the day to take the OCs?

It is up to individual preference but it should be taken about the same time daily. Preferably, it should be taken when you are likely not to forget or when you are not 'busy' or in a 'rush'. Don't forget to bring your pills when you are travelling!

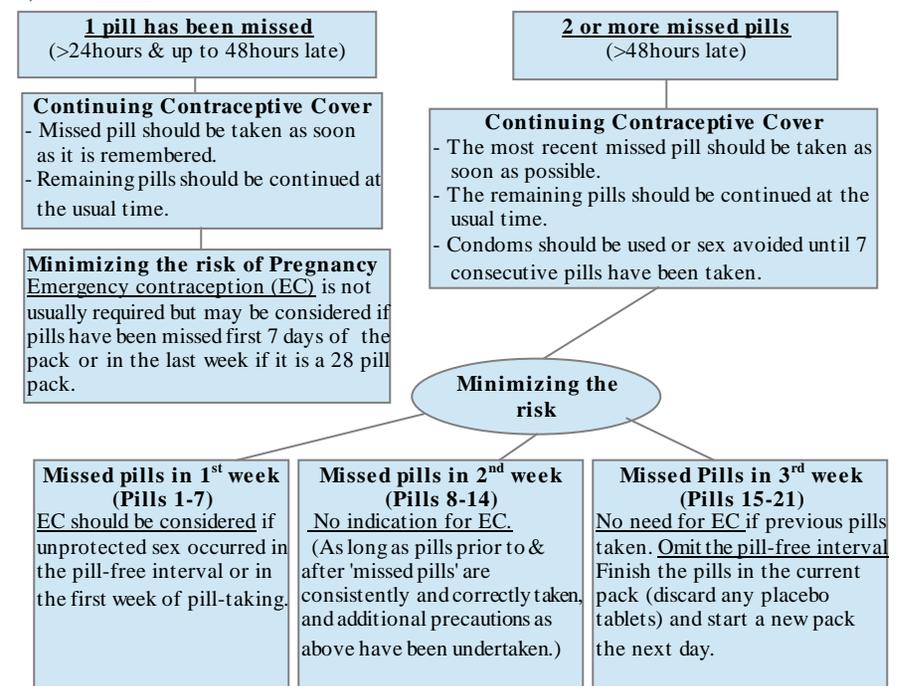
What is the difference between a 21 pill pack and the 28 pill pack?

All the tablets in a 21 pill pack are active pills that contain hormones. After completing the pack, you will break from taking OC pills for 7 days before you MUST start the next pack on the 8th day. It is very important that you do not forget to start the next OC pack on time.

In a 28 pill pack, there are 21 active tablets and 7 inactive pills for the last week. If you are taking this preparation, you need to start taking the next pack the next day after completing taking the previous pack. So there is no break in between OC packs. This preparation is to ensure you do not forget to take the next pack.

Missed Pills Rules

1) COC



2) POP

