

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT
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IT'S ALL ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

THE PILL is a reversible prescription method of birth control. It is a monthly series in which one pill is taken daily. The active ingredients are synthetic hormones like those produced by the body to regulate the menstrual cycle. Combined oral contraceptives contain both estrogen and progestin. Progestin only pills contain no estrogen.

HOW THE PILL WORKS

Combined pills keep the ovaries from releasing eggs (ovulation). Combination pills also thickens the cervical mucus and this prevents sperm from joining with the egg. The Pill can also prevent fertilized eggs from implanting in the uterus.

HOW WELL THE PILL WORKS

The Pill is one of the most effective reversible methods of birth control available to women in the U.S. Of every 100 women who use the Pill, only 5 will become pregnant during the first year of typical use. Women who take the Pill correctly every day have less than a 1% change of getting pregnant.

HOW TO TAKE THE PILL

The Pill must be taken as directed. Follow the instructions in the pill package. You will be advised to start your first pack of pills on the Sunday after your next period begins, even if you are still bleeding. Use a back-up method (such as condoms, contraceptive foam, etc.) for the first week of pill use. Pill protection will begin after 7 days and will continue as long as the Pill is taken on schedule and you don't skip any.

Birth control pills work best if taken at about the same time every day. Pregnancy can happen if an error is made in taking the Pill--especially if:

- , Pills are started too late in the cycle.
- , Two or more pills are missed in a row.
- , Pills are taken in the wrong order.

If you missed a Pill, take it as soon as you remember or take two pills the next day. There is a risk of pregnancy--especially if you are missing two or more pills. It is advised that you use a back-up method (such as condoms, spermicidal foam, etc.) for a week after missed pills. Emergency contraceptive Pill (ECP) is also recommended if intercourse occurred following missed pills without a back-up method. Please follow the manufacturer's guidelines provided in the Pill package insert for more detailed information about what to do if you miss your Pill.

Your clinician will recommend having a check-up about 3 months after starting the Pill. You should always have at least one check-up a year. Be sure to tell any new clinician you see that you are on the Pill.

The Pill may be less effective in preventing pregnancy if taken with other medicines such as those that control seizures or tuberculosis or some antibiotics. Talk to your clinician about what to do, if prescribed any medication while taking the pill.

The pill provides no protection against sexually transmitted infections

Pregnancy can happen any time after you stop taking the Pill. To plan a pregnancy, stop taking the Pill and use another method until your periods become regular. Normal menstrual cycles usually return in a few months. There is no need to take a break from using the Pill, even if you have used it for a long time.

ADVANTAGES OF THE PILL

The Pill is convenient to use. Women who take the Pill have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">< More regular periods.< Less menstrual flow.< Less menstrual cramping.< Less iron deficiency anemia.< Fewer ectopic (tubal) pregnancies.< Less pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).< Less acne.< Less premenstrual tension.< Less rheumatoid arthritis.	The Pill offers significant risk reduction for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">< Ovarian and endometrial cancers.< Non-cancerous breast tumors and ovarian cysts.< Osteoporosis-thinning of the bones.
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WHO CAN USE THE PILL

Most women can take the Pill safely. You should **not** use the pill if:

- < You think you are pregnant.
- < You are over 35 and smoke more than 15 cigarettes a day.
- < You have unexplained vaginal bleeding.
- < You have inherited a tendency to develop blood clots.
- < You have blood clots in the veins or lungs.
- < You have active liver disease.
- < You have had liver tumors.
- < You have cancer of the breast or uterus or other estrogen-dependent tumors.

You may need special tests to see whether you should take the Pill if you have certain **medical conditions**, such as:

- < Heart disease.
- < Liver disease.
- < High blood pressure or cholesterol levels.
- < Diabetes, even if it only occurred during pregnancy.
- < Certain types of migraine headaches.
- < Seizure disorders that require medication.
- < A skin condition called "malignant melanoma" that has spread to another part of the body.
- < A brain tumor called meningioma.
- < A parent or sibling who had a stroke, heart attack, or clots in the lung before the age of 55.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS WHILE TAKING THE PILL

Many women adjust to taking the Pill with few or no problems. But all medications, including the Pill, pose some health risks for the women who use them. Some minor reactions that usually disappear after two to three months of use include:

- *Spotting between periods.
- *Breast tenderness.
- *Nausea or vomiting.
- *Weight gain or loss.
- *Severe Depression.
- *Increased or decreased sexual desire.

Persistent side effects may often be relieved by having your clinician change your Pill prescription.

Pill users have a slightly greater chance than non-users of developing certain serious problems that can be fatal in very rare cases. These include: heart attack, stroke, blood clots in the veins or lungs, and/or liver tumors. The chance of developing some of these problems increase with age-especially when certain other health problems are present. The risks are increased by smoking more than 15 cigarettes a day and by such conditions as diabetes, high blood pressure, or high levels of cholesterol in the blood and certain inherited conditions that increase the risk of blood clotting.

WARNING SIGNS

Tell your clinician **immediately** if you have:

- *Sudden or constant pain or redness in the legs.
- *Sudden shortness of breath or spitting up blood.
- *Sudden pain in the abdomen, chest, or arm.
- *Severe headache.
- *Sudden blurred or double vision or loss of vision in one eye.
- *Yellowing of skin or eyes.
- *Severe depression.
- *Weakness of arm, leg, or face on one side of the body.

HOW TO GET THE PILL AND WHAT IT COSTS

The Pill is available at a reduced cost to UW-Stout students through the Student Health Services. A reproductive health examination is completed prior to a prescription for the Pill and annually thereafter. Please call Student Health Services at 232-1314 for an appointment.