

Oral Contraceptive Pill

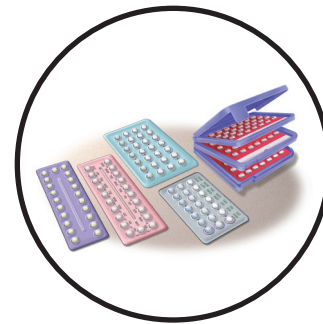
The oral contraceptive pill, also known as birth control pill, is suitable for most healthy women, regardless of age, and can be used long-term. It is one of the world's most prescribed medications – over 100 million women across the globe rely on it. There are two kinds of oral contraceptives, the combined oral contraceptive (COC), which contains both estrogen and progestin, and the progestin-only contraceptive (POP). The Pill is available at pharmacies but requires a prescription.

How does it work?

- The oral contraceptive pill works by preventing the ovary from releasing an egg, thickening the cervical mucus making it difficult for the sperm to reach the egg, and changing the lining of the uterus making implantation difficult.
- The Pill is taken every day, ideally at the same time each day. Traditional pills are set up with pills for three weeks, followed by a pill-free week or a week of placebo pills.
- Newer pill options have adjusted the regimen to provide effective contraception with lower doses of hormones and as little as two days of placebo to minimize hormone fluctuations and side effects.

How effective is it?

- **Typical use failure rate:** 90 of 1000 women during first year of use
- **Perfect use failure rate:** 3 of 1000 women during first year of use



Advantages

- + Highly effective
- + Reversible
- + Does not interfere with sex
- + May reduce or eliminate menstrual flow and cramps
- + Regulates menstrual cycle
- + Decreases premenstrual symptoms

Disadvantages

- Effectiveness may be reduced by other medications
- May cause irregular bleeding or spotting
- May cause breast tenderness, nausea, or headaches
- Must be taken every day, at the same time
- May increase the risk of blood clots, particularly in women who have certain blood disorders or a family history of blood clots
- Does not protect against STIs

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Combined Oral Contraceptive (COC)

Contains both estrogen and progestin

Advantages

- + Decreases acne
- + Decreases body and facial hair growth
- + Reduces the risks of endometrial, ovarian and colon cancers
- + Reduces the risk of fibroids and ovarian cysts
- + May reduce perimenopausal symptoms

Disadvantages

- Should not be used by women over the age of 35 who smoke

Progestin-Only Contraceptive (POP)

Contains progestin only

Advantages

- + May be suitable for women who cannot take estrogen
- + May be suitable for breastfeeding women
- + May be suitable for women over 35 years old who smoke

Disadvantages

- Some women may have hormonal side effects: acne, headaches, breast sensitivity, mood issues, unwanted hair growth