

What to Do if You Have a Problem

The Pill is one of the safest birth control methods you can choose. Serious problems happen **only rarely**. The most serious problem is the possibility of blood clots. Usually, a serious problem will start with “warning” signs. Know these signs, and contact your health care provider, clinic, or emergency room if you have any of the following:

- Severe pain in your belly
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
- Severe pain or redness and swelling in your leg
- Severe headaches
- Eye problems, such as blurry vision, flashing lights or blindness

Effectiveness

If 100 women took the Pill correctly (around the same time, every day) for a year, only 1 of them would get pregnant. The Pill is one of the most effective methods of birth control if you take it correctly.

REMEMBER: taking the Pill correctly means taking it around the same time (within 4 hours), every day.

Pregnancy and the Pill

If you stop taking your Pill, you can get pregnant right away. If you do not want to get pregnant, start using another birth control method. If you want to get pregnant, taking prenatal vitamins will help you have a healthy pregnancy.

Taking the Pill will not affect your future ability to have children.

Common Questions

Why do I have to take the Pill around the same time (within 4 hours) every day?

When you take your pills at around the same time each day, you help keep the Pill’s hormones at the **best level for preventing pregnancy**. You also help prevent things like spotting or breakthrough bleeding.

What if I miss a period?

If you forgot one or more pills... Call the clinic to schedule a pregnancy test and **keep taking your pills**.

If you took every Pill on time... Keep taking your pills. If you miss a second period, call the clinic.

If I take antibiotics or medications for HIV, will that change how well the Pill works?

You may need to use condoms or not have sex while you are taking antibiotics and for a week after you’ve finished your antibiotics. You also may need to use condoms if you are taking medications for HIV. Ask your health care provider or call the clinic if you have questions about medications you are taking.

Should I stop taking the Pill if I break up with my partner or stop having sex?

Many women choose to stay on the Pill after a break up. This way they do not have to worry about getting pregnant when they meet a new partner or go through the side effects that come with starting over on the Pill. The Pill also prevents cramps, heavy periods and acne.

To learn more about other birth control methods:

Check out our brochures on:

Depo Provera (“The Shot”)
Emergency Contraception (“EC”)
Condoms
The IUD
The Patch
The Ring
Sterilization

Check out our website at:

www.kingcounty.gov/health/famplan

To find a Family Planning Provider near you:

Call the Family Planning Hotline
1-800-770-4334 **OR** TTY 1-800-848-5429
For confidential information and referrals

To prevent a pregnancy when you are not using the Pill, use a condom or another birth control method:

If you miss two pills in a row or have sex without using any birth control, you want to take Emergency Contraception (also known as Plan B) right away to prevent a pregnancy. Call your clinic or go to: **www.not-2-late.com** to find a clinic or pharmacy near you.

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Your Guide to Getting Started

when you
choose the
pill

What is it?

Birth control pills, often called “the Pill”, are pills you take every day to prevent pregnancy. They are made of hormones that occur naturally in a woman’s body. The Pill works mainly by stopping the ovary from releasing an egg.

Getting Started with the Pill

You are about to join the millions of women who have safely taken the Pill! Follow the step-by-step instructions below to get the most positive, worry-free start with the Pill.

- Women may start the Pill at any time during their cycle. Talk to your health care provider to discuss what would work best for you.
- Swallow one Pill every day, around the **same time** (within 4 hours) each day.
- Take one Pill a day, **in order**, even if you have spotting or bleeding between periods.
- When you finish a pack of pills, begin the next pack. For example, if you take your last Pill on Saturday, start your next pack on Sunday.
- During your first 7 days on the Pill, you are not fully protected against pregnancy. You need to use a backup method like **condoms** during this time. If you don’t use a backup method, talk to your health care provider about **emergency contraception**.
- If you start your pills on the first day of your period, no backup method is needed. You are protected against pregnancy right away.

TIP: Try to choose something that you do around the same time each day, like eating lunch or brushing your teeth, to help you get into a good Pill-taking routine.

What to Expect: Common Side Effects

You may experience side effects with the Pill. Usually, these side effects will go away after 1 - 3 months, as your body gets used to being on the Pill. Some common side effects are:

- Bleeding between periods (“breakthrough bleeding”)
- Breast tenderness
- Headaches
- Feeling bloated
- Sick to your stomach (very rarely, throwing up)
- Weight gain or loss
- Changes in mood
- Decrease in sex drive or arousal

If you feel that these side effects are becoming a problem for you, **don’t** stop taking the Pill. Call your health care provider or clinic first. Sometimes, changing to a different type of Pill can help. There are over **40** different brands of Pills available today! Your health care provider can work with you to find the best pills for **your body**.

Taking the Pill with food can help keep you from getting sick to your stomach. If you throw up within two hours of taking your Pill, treat this as a missed Pill. Also, if you are getting sick from the pills, call your clinic to set up an appointment to switch your Pills.

When You Miss a Pill...

There may be times when you miss or forget to take a Pill. Making up missed Pills can sometimes be confusing. If you’re ever unsure about what to do, call your health care provider or clinic.

If you miss or forget 1 Pill:

- Take the missed Pill as soon as you remember.
- If you don’t remember the Pill until the next day, take 2 Pills that day with food. You can take them both at the same time, but some women get sick to their stomach or throw up from taking two pills at the same time. So you could also take one Pill with food as soon as you remember and one Pill with food later in the day.
- Take the next Pill at your usual time and keep taking 1 Pill a day as usual.
- You are still protected from getting pregnant.

If you miss or forget 2 or more pills in a row, you may no longer be covered against pregnancy.

- If you’ve had sex without a condom in the past 5 days, take Emergency Contraception (otherwise known as Plan B).
- Use condoms or don’t have sex for 7 days.
- Keep taking 1 Pill a day, around the same time. After 7 days back on the Pill, you will be protected against pregnancy.
- If you get to the “period week” pills (the 4th week of your Pill pack), skip these pills and, instead, immediately start a new pack of pills.
- If you miss a period or are concerned about being pregnant, take a pregnancy test or go to your health care provider to get a pregnancy test. Remember, it takes ten days from the time of having sex before a pregnancy will show up on a test.

Missed pills can cause spotting or bleeding between periods.

EC : Don’t Forget About Emergency Contraception (EC)! If you’ve missed 2 or more pills in a row and you’ve had sex without a condom in the past 5 days, take EC as soon as possible to help prevent a pregnancy.

Benefits of Being on the Pill

Women choose the Pill because it is safe, easy, and effective. But did you know that the Pill also helps many women:

- Have regular periods
- Have lighter periods, with less pain and cramping
- Have stronger bones
- Skip a period that would normally come during an important event (like honeymoon, school exam)
- Improve acne

Research shows that the Pill protects against: cancer of the ovaries and womb, ovarian cysts, and non-cancerous breast lumps.

Some Disadvantages: What You Should Know

While the Pill continues to be a popular choice for many women, it isn’t the best fit for everyone. The list below will help you to understand why the Pill is not the best choice for some women:

- You have to remember to take the Pill every day, around the same time every day.
- The Pill does not protect you from HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STDs). You need to use a **condom** with the Pill if you think you need protection.
- Your pill pack isn’t invisible — some women want a method that no one can find out about.
- Some women cannot take estrogen (a hormone found in many brands of the Pill).