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Birth Control Pill/Oral Contraceptive Pill Information

How They Work:

Birth control pills are similar to the natural hormones, estrogen and progesterone, which are produced by your body. Birth control pills use these same hormones to stop the release of eggs, similar to when you are pregnant. Birth control pills are very effective when taken daily to maintain the hormone levels. Birth control pills are approximately 99% effective but there is always that 1% chance of pregnancy even when taken correctly.

How To Take Birth Control Pills:

1. Begin taking pills on the first Sunday after your menstrual period begins. If the period begins on Sunday, then start pills on that day.
2. Take one pill each day, approximately the same time of day and associate it with something you do daily such as brushing your teeth, putting on make-up or combing your hair.
3. There are 28 pills in each birth control package which you take for four weeks. Begin a new package of pills the day after you take the last pill in your old package. Remember to always buy a new package of pills when you start a new package so you won't run out.
4. You will have your period while you take the last 7 pills of the pack. Your period may be lighter and you may have less cramping now that you are taking birth control pills.
5. When you start taking pills for the first time, use another method of contraception (foam, condoms, etc.) until you have finished taking your first 14 pills. **YOU ARE NOT PROTECTED FROM BECOMING PREGNANT UNTIL YOU HAVE FINISHED TWO WEEKS OF PILLS!**
6. If you forget to take a pill, take it the next day as soon as you remember it, and your regular pill at your usual time. If you forget your pills two days in a row, take two pills each day for the next two days. **EVERY TIME YOU FORGET TO TAKE ONE OR TWO PILLS USE AN ADDITIONAL METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL FOR THE NEXT 7 DAYS, SINCE YOU ARE NOT PROTECTED FROM BECOMING PREGNANT BY THE PILL DURING THAT TIME.**
7. **IF YOU FORGET TO TAKE 3 PILLS, PLEASE CALL US FOR INSTRUCTIONS.**
8. Certain medications **DECREASE** the effectiveness of the pill and you can become pregnant during this time. Please inform other care providers that you are on oral contraceptives and please ask us if you need to use another method of birth control when you take other medications, especially antibiotics and seizure medications.
9. Birth control pills will not prevent you from getting any kind of sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS. Use condoms along with your birth control pills to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

What to Expect:

1. For the first two to three months you may experience some spotting while your body is adjusting to the pills. Continue to take the pills as instructed. Inform your care provider if spotting continues past three cycles.
2. Since the birth control pills affect your body like a pregnancy, you may have some of the following symptoms: nausea, breast tenderness, irritability, or depression. This should decrease after the first 2 to 3 months.
3. When you are taking the birth control pills, you can expect your monthly periods to be shorter, lighter, and accompanied by less cramping. You should bleed at least one day. Let us know if it is shorter than one day.
4. Remember that the risks from the pill are small, less than those of pregnancy.
5. The major complications of birth control pills that occur very rarely include:
 - a. Blood clot (legs, lungs, brain, eyes)
 - b. Jaundice
 - c. Rash
 - d. High blood pressure
 - e. Mental depression
6. The risks of these complications are higher in women who smoke and are over the age of 35. **CALL US IMMEDIATELY** if any of these symptoms occur:
 - a. SEVERE pain in your legs
 - b. Chest pain
 - c. Unusual and severe headaches
 - d. Vision loss or disturbances
7. If you have any questions or problems other than those mentioned above. **DO NOT STOP TAKING YOUR PILLS**, but call us immediately. If you stop taking your pills because you no longer need them, you may not have a period for 6 weeks. It is better to continue your pills unless you are sure that you will not need them for 4 months or longer. If you decide to stop taking pills, do so only at the end of the package.
8. If you are planning to have surgery, discuss with your surgeon the fact that you are taking pills. He/she may ask you to stop taking them prior to surgery.
9. If you desire to become pregnant, stop taking the birth control pills one month before your planned pregnancy and use another method of birth control (foam, condoms) for one month. This allows your uterus to begin producing a more normal lining, which is necessary to sustain your pregnancy.