

BIRTH CONTROL PILL INSTRUCTIONS

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

DESCRIPTION

Birth control pills contain hormones similar to the hormones your body produces and work primarily by preventing ovulation.

SIDE EFFECTS

The most common side effect of birth control pills is "breakthrough bleeding", a flow of blood at any time when your period is not due. You may notice only light spotting or you may have a heavy flow similar to your regular period. This extra bleeding may occur for the first 2 or 3 months you take the pill and will be more likely when skipping pills or taking pills late. If there is a concern of possible pregnancy or breakthrough bleeding after 2 or 3 months of use, you should see your medical provider.

Other side effects you may notice include: nausea, mild weight gain, fluid retention, breast tenderness, mild headache or missed periods. If these side effects are severe or persist beyond 2 months, make a return appointment with your medical provider. Since the pill may also raise blood pressure in some persons, a blood pressure check should be done periodically.

STARTING THE PILLS

Below are 2 ways you can begin taking your pills. Follow the method which your health care provider recommends.

SUNDAY START - Take your first pill on the Sunday after your period begins whether or not you are bleeding. If your period begins on a Sunday, take your pill on that day. Each new pack will begin on Sunday.

FIRST DAY START - Take your first pill on the first day of your period, whatever the day of the week. You will begin each new pack thereafter on that same day of the week.

Be sure to use an additional birth control method (or abstain from sex) for the first pill pack when first starting birth control pills, when changing brands, or when using another medication that might interfere with the pill's effectiveness.

TAKING THE PILLS

Once you start taking pills, take them at the same time each day in package sequence - whether it is morning or night. If there is something you regularly do at that time, taking your pill at that time will help you to remember. Missing birth control pills could result in "breakthrough bleeding" as well as pregnancy. Back up contraception such as condoms should be used for the remainder of the pill pack if you miss any pills. With unprotected intercourse, emergency

contraception could be considered. Contact your medical provider or pharmacy for instructions on resuming your pill pack.

A). 21 Day Pill Packs: Continue taking pills until you have taken all 21 pills. Then, wait seven days and begin taking your next package on the following (8th) day, even if you are still bleeding - three weeks on - one week off!

B). 28 Day Pill Packs: Start the pill as directed taking one pill a day until all 28 pills are taken. Then begin a new package on the following day.

C). There may be other pills available which are not 21 or 28 day. Follow your medical provider's instructions.

MISSED PERIOD

If you miss a period, call your medical provider. You will probably be given an appointment or asked to come in for a pregnancy test.

PILL DANGER SIGNS

Read the medical information packaged with your pills carefully, save it, and remember that the five symptoms we have listed below may mean serious trouble. If you experience any of them, see a physician right away. To remember these signs, think of ACHES:

- A = Abdominal pain (severe)
- C = Chest pain (severe) or shortness of breath
- H = Headaches (severe)
- E = Eye problems (blurred vision or loss of vision)
- S = Severe leg pains (in calf or thigh)

Some of these symptoms are more likely to occur in women over 35 years of age who are heavy smokers, who are hypertensive and/or who have a family history of any of these conditions.

CALL THE STUDENT HEALTH CENTER IF...

- You are having breakthrough bleeding after using 2-3 packages of pills.
- You have any unusual symptoms that may be related to the pills.
- You miss a period.
- When you begin your last package of pills, call to make an appointment for an exam and a Pap test.

Student Health Center

WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

08/18/2006



618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.