

# Combined Hormonal Contraception

## When do I start?

- If you start the first packet of pills on the first day of your period you will be protected immediately.
- If you are instructed to start at any other time, you will need to use extra precautions for 7 days.
- You are protected against pregnancy during the pill free interval as long as you have taken the last 7 pills correctly and intend to continue with your pill.

## Different ways to take my pill?

There are now several choices about how to take your pill, ring or patch:

- Standard use 21 days (21 active pills, 1 ring or 3 patches) Use your pill, ring or patch for 21 days, then to have a 7 day break, restarting your pill, ring or patch on the 8th day.
- Tailored use Shortened hormone-free interval (21 active pills, 1 ring or 3 patches) Use your pill, ring or patch for 21 days, then to have a 4 day break, restarting your pill, ring or patch on the 5th day.
- Extended use (tricycling) 9 weeks (3 x 21 active pills or 3 rings, or 9 patches used) Use your pill, ring or patch for 3 months consecutively then have a 4 or 7 day break, restarting your pill, ring or patch on the 5th or 8th day.
- Flexible extended Use your pill, ring or patch EVERY DAY for at least 21 days until breakthrough bleeding occurs for 3 days in a row (whilst still using your pill, ring or patch), then have a 4 day break, restarting your pill, ring or patch on the 5th day.
- Continuous use of active pills, rings or patches. Use your pill, ring or patch every day without a break. You may experience breakthrough bleeding to begin with but this usually settles with time.
- Always start your next pill, ring or patch whether you are bleeding or not, as instructed in the regimen that you have chosen.
- If you have chosen to have a hormone free interval you will be protected from pregnancy during this time providing you have used your method correctly.

## What should I do if I miss my pill?

- Try to take the pill at the same time every day.
- If you are late taking your pill take it as soon as you remember, and the next one at your normal time.
- It is OK to take 2 pills together or 2 in the same day.
- If you are within 24 hours of your normal time you are still protected.
- If you miss 2 or more pills you will need to use condoms too for 7 days. If these 7 days run into your 7-day break, then miss your break and run 2 packets back to back. You may not bleed but that is not a problem.
- If you miss 2 or more pills in the first 7 pills of your packet you may need emergency contraception so contact your local clinic.

## Further advice

- Medicines If you take drugs to treat epilepsy, HIV, TB or take the complementary medicine St John's Wort please tell us as we may need to change your contraception.
- Diarrhoea & Vomiting If you vomit within 2 hours of taking your pill, try to take another pill; if you are within the 24 hour window you are covered otherwise refer to the missed pill rule.
- If you have severe diarrhoea lasting more than 24 hours this may make your pill less effective, follow the missed pill rules.

### Side effects and warnings

Seek URGENT medical attention if you experience any of the following symptoms, which could indicate you have a blood clot (they are rare).

- Painful swelling in one or both legs
- Severe chest or stomach pain
- Breathlessness or coughing with blood
- A bad fainting episode or collapse
- Unusual headaches, difficulty with sight or speech
- More severe migraine attacks than is usual for you
- Numbness, weakness or pins and needles of a limb

For other side effects please refer to the patient information leaflet enclosed in the packet

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