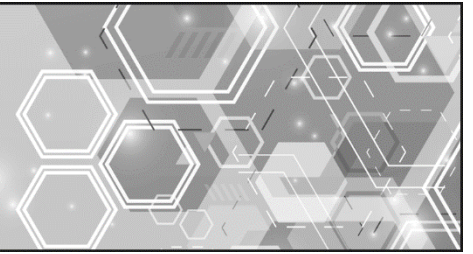




Durham Region Health Department Facts about...



Birth Control Pill

What is it?

The birth control pill (the pill) is made up of one or two hormones, estrogen and/or progestin. The hormones prevent pregnancy by keeping the eggs from leaving the ovaries and thickening the mucous in the vagina to stop sperm from getting to the eggs. They also change the lining of the uterus, making it difficult for an egg to attach to the wall of the uterus. The pill is taken daily for 21 days, often followed by a week of hormone-free (placebo) pills, or continuously with no breaks.

How effective is it?

Less than 3 out of 1000 women will get pregnant every year if they **always** take the pill each day as directed. When the pill is **not** taken as directed, 90 out of every 1000 women are at risk of becoming pregnant.

What are the side effects of this method?

Irregular bleeding, headache, nausea, bloating, increase in appetite, mood changes, acne, and breast tenderness may be experienced by some individuals. Most side effects disappear with continued use. You should speak to your health care provider if side effects continue for longer than three months.

What are the benefits?

Benefits of the pill can include effective prevention of pregnancy, regulated periods with less bleeding and cramping, and less pre-menstrual symptoms. The pill can also decrease the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancers. Some forms of the pill can decrease acne and help manage other conditions related to the menstrual cycle, like polycystic ovarian disorder or fibroids.

What are the limitations?

You must visit a health care provider to get a prescription for the pill. The pill needs to be taken every day at the same time. Missing pills greatly decreases the effectiveness of this method and increases the risk of becoming pregnant.

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If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



The pill may increase the risk of stroke, heart attack, or blood clots. Some types of the pill are not recommended for women over the age of 35 years who smoke, have severe migraine headaches with aura, breast cancer, liver tumors or liver disease, and those with high blood pressure, a history of blood clots, stroke, or heart disease. Your healthcare provider will assess your risk prior to recommending the pill and monitor your health at follow up visits, such as taking your blood pressure.

What are the effects on breastfeeding?

Estrogen may reduce breastmilk supply. It is recommended that if breastfeeding, a progestin only type of birth control is used. Follow up with your healthcare provider for more information on breastfeeding and birth control options.

You should know...

- There are many types of birth control pills available. If you have side effects that are long lasting, you should talk with your health care provider, as a different type of pill may be better for you.
- Stopping and starting the pill repeatedly (pill breaks) is **not** recommended. This places you at risk for unplanned pregnancy and irregular periods.
- The pill does **not** affect your ability to have children in the future.
- The pill does not prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Practice safe sex and always use a condom with lubricant when having oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

Contact your health care provider immediately if you experience any of the following when taking the birth control pill:

- Sudden and severe chest pain/burning/pressure
- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath
- Sudden and severe abdominal pain
- Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)
- Severe headaches or visual problems

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