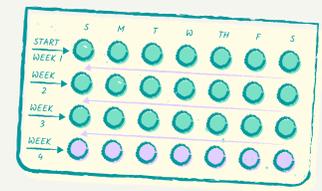


The Birth Control Pill



Oral Contraceptives



What is the birth control pill

- The birth control pill may also be referred to the Oral contraceptive pills(OCP) or simply “the pill.” Birth control pills are prescription tablets taken orally (by mouth) once a day by a person with a uterus and contain hormones that act on the user’s monthly cycle to prevent pregnancy.
- The type and dosage of hormones varies by brand or type of pill. There are two main types of the pill: 1) The combination pill, which contains hormones estrogen and progesterone and 2) The progestin only pill, which does not contain estrogen.



How does it work?

The hormones in the combined pill prevent pregnancy as they stop your ovaries from releasing an ovum (egg cell) each month. This also makes the cervical mucus thicker, making it harder for sperm to get in to the uterus, and thins the lining of the uterus so it is harder for a fertilized egg to implant/grow. The progestin only pill prevents pregnancy mainly by thickening the cervical mucus and thinning the lining of the uterus.

How do I use the birth control pill?

You need to take a birth control pill once a day as prescribed, ideally at the **same time each day** for greatest efficacy. Follow the directions on the packaging to take the pills in the correct order (they will be numbered). Pills come in packs of 21 or 28. The first 21 pills in both types of packs contain hormones. In the 28 pack, the last 7 pills don’t contain hormones and are there to help you remember to take a pill everyday. You will get your period during the last 7 days of the cycle, and begin a new pack after the 28th day.



Where can I get the birth control pill? What is the cost?

The birth control pill is a medication a doctor can prescribe for you. In Nova Scotia, some pharmacists can also prescribe some types of birth control pills. There are multiple brands of pill, and each has different amounts of estrogen and/or progestin in them. You can discuss your options with a medical professional. You may need to try a few brands before you find a pill that works best for you. The cost of the pill varies, but average cost is **\$22/month**. The pill is covered by most insurance companies.



Are there any side effects?

There may be some minor side effects such as spotting, bloating, breast tenderness, nausea, or mood changes, and change in vaginal discharge. If you experience persistent side effects, you may want to talk to a doctor about trying a different type of pill or another kind of contraception. Some rare but serious risks are associated with the Pill, such as blood clots and stroke.



How effective is the birth control pill?

If used perfectly as directed, the Pill is 99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy. Based on average use (ex: not taking it at the same time every day, missing pills), it is **91% effective**. The Pill does NOT offer any protection against Sexually Transmitted Infections or HIV.

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