

Missed Pills

You only have to worry about missing 2 hormone pills:

- in the first week after starting the pill for the first time or after taking inactive pills or a break from the hormone pills
- or in the last week of taking pills before taking inactive pills or a break

For other weeks, you still have good contraception unless you miss more than 8 hormone pills

If you miss 2 or more hormone pills in the first or last week or more than 8 hormone pills for other weeks, you need to use the 7 day rule

The 7 day rule

- You will not be safe until you have taken 7 hormone pills in a row
- Use another method of contraception such as condoms or do not have sexual intercourse while taking the 7 hormone pills
- If during this time a condom breaks or slips off, you will need an emergency contraceptive pill (ECP)
- If there are less than 7 hormone pills left in the pack, finish the hormone pills and start your new pack immediately (miss the 7 inactive pills or the 7 day break)

If you miss one or more pills, you may get spotting or bleeding. If you vomit or have severe diarrhoea for a week or more, you should follow the 7 day rule.

When first starting the pill

Some people notice changes such as feeling sick (especially if the pill is taken on an empty stomach), tender breasts and unexpected vaginal bleeding. These usually improve with time.

If you are concerned about any changes, we recommend that you do not stop the pill but phone for advice.

Your period may be lighter than usual, but if you miss your period, do not stop the pill - phone for advice.

It is common to have irregular bleeding while taking the pill continuously. If this happens to you, you can take a short break by following these instructions:

1. Check you haven't missed any hormone pills in the last 7 days. If you have missed one or more hormone pills, then keep taking hormone pills until you have had a hormone pill each day for 7 days.
2. Stop taking your hormone pills for 7 days. You can stop for less than 7 days if you only want a short bleed.
3. Start taking your hormone pills again and keep going as above.

It is important that you do NOT miss more than 7 hormone pills.

You need to start taking hormone pills after 7 days even if you are still bleeding, or you will not be protected against pregnancy.

If you continue to have irregular bleeding, you should return to the clinic for advice.

Contact a Family Planning Clinic or your doctor at once if you have

- sudden chest pain or cough up blood or become short of breath
- a painful calf (lower part of the leg)
- a severe headache which affects your vision, speech, arms or legs.

Ask your health professional whether any new medicine will affect your contraceptive pill.

Temporary risk factors

- plane flights
- high altitude
- surgery
- temporary immobility.

The pill may be affected by

- medication for epilepsy
- rifampicin for TB
- medication for HIV infection
- laxatives
- St John's Wort.

If you have unprotected sexual intercourse contact a Family Planning Clinic or your doctor for **emergency contraception** within 72 hours (24 hours if possible). The sooner the better.

How to take your pill: Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill

This pill has 21 hormone pills and 7 inactive pills (28 pills).

There are different ways of taking the pill:

- take all 28 pills and have a bleed each month
- take just the hormone pills and have no bleeds at all
- take just the hormone pills some months and have a bleed every few months.

Taking hormone pills all the time is better contraception.

Start your pill on

Take one pill at the same time every day.

If you want to avoid bleeding:

- Miss out the inactive pills and start the hormone pills in the next packet
- Continue like this, taking all the hormone pills without a break.

If you want to have a bleed each month:

- Take the inactive pills – you will get a bleed during this time.

If you want to have a bleed every few months:

- Miss out the inactive pills most months and just take the inactive pills when you want to have a bleed.

Your Health Professional