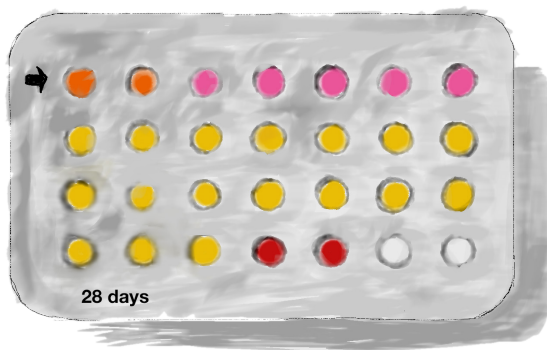


Combined contraceptive pills

What are they?

Contraceptive pills provide the same hormones that a woman's body produces (estrogens and progestogens) in a set dose, in tablet form, and this prevents ovulation. You take them for 3 weeks, preferably at the same time every day. During the 4th week you do not take any pills and you should have your period.



What are they for?

They prevent you from getting pregnant and regulate the hormonal cycle in women whose periods are irregular, painful or too heavy or frequent.

What can't they be used for?

They do not protect you from catching sexually transmitted diseases and they are not a method of abortion or interrupting pregnancy. They do not stop you getting pregnant if you take them after having unprotected sex.

What formulations are available?

There are 2 standard formulations:

1. 21-day packs of pills to take every day for 3 weeks. You take a break from the pills during the fourth week.
2. 28-day packs of pills to take every day for 4 weeks. The pills for the fourth week are medication-free (they are placebo pills, usually composed of lactose).

This means that you do not have to take any breaks in the treatment.

What side effects can they have?

For the first 3 months of treatment, your periods may be irregular, with light vaginal bleeding halfway through your menstrual cycle (around day 14).

You may also experience liquid retention, weight gain, headaches (especially if you suffer from migraine), mood changes or irritability and stomach upsets. Although it is unusual, this medication may cause your blood to thicken and form blood clots in your veins (thrombosis), as happens with all methods of hormonal birth control. This is more frequent in women that smoke or whose legs are immobilized for long periods due to frequent long-distance travel, bandages or plaster.

Can anyone take them?

If you have a disease that affects your blood circulation (thrombosis, lupus, high blood pressure, diabetes) or a liver disease, or you have a history of hormone-sensitive cancer, you should see your doctor before taking them.

When do you start taking them?

You can start taking them at any time during your menstrual cycle, but for the first 7 to 9 days you should use a condom when you have sex, because the treatment is still not 100% effective.

What happens if I forget to take a pill?

In the first 24 hours, you can take a pill immediately and continue taking them as usual. If more than 24 hours have gone by, you should not take the forgotten pill; you should continue taking them as usual as if nothing had happened, and you should use condoms for the following week.