

## What is the progestin-only pill?

The progestin-only birth control pill, sometimes called the mini-pill, is a pill that you take at the same time every day to prevent pregnancy.

## How does it work?

The hormone progestin thickens cervical mucus so sperm can't get into the uterus. It also keeps your ovaries from releasing an egg in about half of menstrual cycles and prevents you from getting pregnant.

The pill does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Always use a condom to help protect yourself from HIV and other STIs.

## What are the benefits of taking the progestin-only pill?

- An effective form of birth control
- Rapidly reversible
- Few contraindications to using progestin-only pills
- Safe for women who just gave birth or are breastfeeding
- No estrogen, if estrogen is a concern
- Some women have very little to no bleeding.

# Progestin-only Pill



## How effective is it?

*Perfect Use:* Less than 1% of women who always remember to take the pill at the same time every day will get pregnant in the first year of use.

*Typical Use:* About 9% of all women who use the pill will get pregnant in the first year of use (Includes women who use the pill incorrectly or inconsistently).

## When is it safe to have sex after starting the pill?

If the progestin-only pill is started within 5 days of the start of a normal period, it will protect you right away from pregnancy. If it is not started within five days, use a backup method such as condoms or don't have sexual intercourse for 2 days after starting the pill.

Tell all your health care providers about any medications you are taking, including the progestin-only pill. A few medications can make the pill less effective in preventing pregnancy. There are other, more effective birth control methods that you may want to use.

## Will I have side effects from the progestin-only pill?

Women have spotting, irregular bleeding or no bleeding with progestin-only pills.

Women who take the progestin-only pill may have side effects that include nausea, sore breasts, headaches and moodiness.

These side effects do not mean that the pill is dangerous or is not working. They generally will go away 2 to 3 months after starting the pill. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions or concerns about any side effects.

## What if I want to stop taking the pill or become pregnant?

As soon as you stop taking the pill, you will be able to get pregnant. If you do not want to get pregnant right away, you will need to use another method of birth control.

## Warning Signs:

Call your clinic immediately if you:

- Think you may be pregnant
- Have heavy or prolonged vaginal bleeding

Or experience:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Severe headache
- Severe pain or numbness in your arm or leg
- New problems with your eyesight, like blurry vision or seeing spots
- Severe abdominal pain

These can be signs of rare but serious, life-threatening health problems, such as heart attack, stroke, or blood clots in the veins or lungs, and require the care of a medical provider.

### **What if I missed pills?**

If you missed a pill and it is more than 3 hours since the pill should have been taken:

- Take 1 pill as soon as possible.
- Continue taking a pill every day, at the same time each day, even if it means taking 2 pills on the same day.
- Use a back-up birth control method, such as condoms, or don't have sex until you have taken pills correctly and on time for 2 days in a row.
- Emergency contraception should be considered and is available if needed.

### **If you have vomiting or severe diarrhea within 3 hours after taking a pill:**

- Take another pill as soon as possible.
- Continue taking a pill every day at the same time each day.
- Use back-up contraception, such as condoms, or don't have sex for 2 days after vomiting or diarrhea has stopped.
- Emergency contraception should be considered.

**Take a pill the same time of day  
every day.**

**Tip:**

**Set an alarm on your phone that  
will go off at the same time every  
day to remind you to take your pill.**