

1. LATEX CONDOMS

Condoms are a way of practicing safer sex. It is **SMART** to use a condom each time you have sex (vaginal, anal, oral), in order to reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection like chlamydia, genital warts, herpes and HIV/AIDS.

To prevent pregnancy, make sure you use a condom -

- the first month on the pill.
- if you miss your pills, any time.
- if you're taking other medication, especially antibiotics (e.g., penicillin, tetracycline).
- if you are sick with vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- if you have break-through bleeding on the hormone pills.



2. It is important to take the pill about the same time every day within the same hour.
3. If you miss your period, restart the next pill package on your regular day. Many women taking birth control pills occasionally miss a period. Call your doctor or sexual health clinic for more information and/or a pregnancy test.

4. ADVERSE EFFECTS

During the first few months, some people may experience mild discomforts such as:

- nausea
- breast tenderness
- mild headaches
- spotting between periods – continue taking the pill and call for advice

These should disappear in three months. **IF YOU HAVE HEAVY BLEEDING, STAY ON THE PILL AND CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.**

BE ALERT for the following signs/symptoms of **severe** adverse effects. If these occur, contact your doctor and/or emergency room immediately:

- A** abdominal pain (severe).
- C** chest pain (severe or shortness of breath, coughing up blood).
- H** headaches (severe).
- E** eye problems like blurred vision, flashing lights or blindness.
- S** severe leg pain (calf or thigh).

5. WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT SMOKE WHILE ON BIRTH CONTROL PILLS. Smoking while on the pill increases a woman's risk of having a heart attack or stroke.



What to do if You Miss Birth Control Pills

Once you take hormonal pills for seven days in a row you get full birth control protection from pregnancy. Birth control pills should be taken every day at about the same time. The problem with missed pills depends upon when in the package, how many pills you missed and if you need emergency contraception pills. If you had only one episode of missed pills in packet, follow these directions:

# Pills Missed	Week Pills Missed	OC Recommendation	Finish this pack	Emergency Contraception	7-day Back-up
1	1	Take 2 pills ASAP	Yes	Yes*	Yes
1	2-3	Take 2 pills ASAP	Yes	No	No
1	4	Skip placebo pills	Yes	No	No
2-4	1	Take 2 pills ASAP	Yes	Yes*	Yes
2-4	2	Take 2 pills ASAP	Yes	No	No
2-4	3	Start new pack	N/A	No	No
2-4	4	Skip placebo	Yes	No	No
5	Any	Take 2 pills – start new pack	N/A	Yes*	No

*If you take emergency contraception as soon as possible then don't double up on pills. Take the next pill on the next day.

How to take...

The Birth Control Pill and Maintenance Instructions



For more information, contact a public health nurse in the Sexual Health program at the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.

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How to take ... The Birth Control Pill

Reading the following directions before you begin taking your pills and any time you are not sure what to do.

When to start your first pack of pills?

Decide with your doctor or clinic what is the best day for you to start taking your first pack of pills. Your pills may be a 21-day or 28-day type.

You might be a ...

Sunday Start

To start the pill, take the first tablet on the Sunday after your period begins. If your period begins on Sunday, start that day.

or a ...

First Day Start

Start your first pill on the same day that your period begins.

What type of pill am I on?

21 - Pill Pack

- Take one pill daily for 21 days.
- No pills are taken for seven days. You will have your period during this week.
- Begin a new pack of pills on the same day of the week you started the first pack (i.e. Sunday)

28 - Pill Pack

- Take one pill daily for 28 days.
- During the last seven days of this pack you will have your period.
- Begin your new pack of pills the next day (i.e. Sunday) after you finish the first pack.
- You are protected against pregnancy when taking the last seven pills.

Points to remember when taking the Pill

- It is normal for your period to be shorter and lighter than usual.
- The pill does not work immediately. Use a second method of birth control for the first cycle of pill use.
- If you miss a period, do not be alarmed. Continue taking your pills and call your family doctor or your clinic for advice.
- When you begin your last pack of pills, phone your clinic or doctor to make an appointment.

Be sure to take your pill at the same time each day.

Times when you need back-up birth control

- Starting first pack or restarting.
- Some medications (i.e. antibiotics and anti-infectives) may interfere with the action of the pill. Your pharmacist can advise about any medication and its effect on the pill.

When you are seen by a doctor for other problems, be sure to inform him/her that you are using birth control pills.

- If you have diarrhea for 24 hours or vomiting within two hours after taking a pill, your body has not had enough time to absorb it. Therefore, there is more chance of becoming pregnant. Take your pills at your regular time (to keep you on schedule) but use back-up birth control for the rest of the pack.

- If surgery is planned, it is **important** that you tell your doctor that you are on the pill. Some surgery may require you to stop pill. While off the pill, use another method of birth control.

Think ahead. Don't run out of pills. When going away for a day or more, remember to take your pills with you!



Missed Pills

If you have missed a pill by more than two hours, you may be at risk of getting pregnant. Keep on taking your pills but you should now use a back-up method of birth control as well as your pill or stop having sex until you start your next package of pills.

Miss 1 pill

- Take it as soon as you remember and take the next pill at the usual time. This means that you might take two pills in one day.
- Continue to take the rest of the pills in your package.
- Remember to use a back-up method of birth control until you start your next package of pills.

Miss 2 pills in a row

- Take two pills as soon as you remember and two pills the next day.
- Then take one pill a day until you finish the pack.
- Remember to use a back-up method of birth control until you start your next package of pills.

Miss 3 or more pills in a row

- Keep taking one pill a day until Sunday.
- On Sunday, start a new package of pills.
- Remember to use a back-up method of birth control from then until you finish the new package of pills.
- You may miss a period this month.

Benefits of the Pill

- lighter and shorter periods
- regular menstrual cycles
- less menstrual cramping
- acne often improves
- reduced risk of cancer of the uterus and ovaries.
- reduced risk of ovarian cysts and of non-cancerous breast disease.