

# What is the pill?

The birth control pill is sometimes referred to as 'the pill.' It is an oral contraceptive made up of synthetic oestrogen and progesterone hormones. It is highly effective in preventing pregnancy.

## Are there different types of pills available?

Yes. There are three types:

- The mini pill: progesterone only.
- The combined pill: oestrogen and progesterone.
- The tri-phasic pill: different amounts of oestrogen and progesterone hormones are taken in three phases.

Your doctor will discuss the pill that is most suitable for you.

## How does the pill work?

The pill prevents the release of the egg from the ovary (ovulation) and thickens the cervical mucus, making it difficult for sperm to pass through the uterus (womb).

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It is started on the first or fifth day of your period, and should be taken at the same time every day. A woman is immediately protected if she starts at the right time.

## Are there side effects when taking the pill?

In general, women experience few side effects when taking the pill. Some side effects may include headache, nausea, breast tenderness and changes in weight.

## Does the pill always prevent pregnancy?

The pill is 99.9% effective when taken correctly - one tablet at the same time everyday.

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## Who can take the pill?

Most women can take the pill. However, there are medical conditions that can prevent the use of the pill, such as heart disease, kidney or liver problems, diabetes and hypertension. Risk factors such as smoking should also be considered. Consultation with your doctor is important before starting the pill.

## What happens if I forget to take the pill?

It is important to remember to take the pill daily. If one pill is missed, you should take it as soon as remembered. If more than one pill is missed consult your nurse or doctor. Breakthrough bleeding sometimes occurs when three or more pills are missed. Even if you only miss one pill you are less protected and should use another contraceptive method for one month such as the condom.

## Does the pill provide protection against HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

No. Only the condom protects against HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) during sexual intercourse. Dental Dams also protect and are used during oral sex.

## What if I decide to get pregnant after using the pill?

Use of the pill will not affect a woman's ability to conceive once she stops using it. However, if she is unable to conceive after one year, she and her partner should consult an infertility specialist.

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