

How to use the combined oral contraceptive pill

Information for patients

Start the pill on the day you take misoprostol - unless advised differently by your doctor or nurse. You will be protected from pregnancy immediately. If you delay starting your pill for more than 5 days after your procedure, then you must use condoms for 7 days after starting your pill. You will then be protected against pregnancy. If you do not commence your pill as above and have unprotected sex during this time, you may require emergency contraception. Please contact your GP, local pharmacy, or local sexual health clinic for advice.

Tailored methods of taking the pill

▪ **Standard Use (21/4 or 21/7)**

Take one pill at around the same time each day for 21 days and then stop for 4 or 7 days before starting your next pack. You will usually have a withdrawal bleed. Start taking the pill again on the fifth or eighth day even if you are still bleeding.

▪ **Continuous Use**

Take one pill every day with no break. You won't have a withdrawal bleed but might still experience some bleeding. Any bleeding you get is likely to reduce over time. If you can't wait for the bleeding to settle down, then try flexible extended pill use (advised below).

▪ **Flexible extended use**

Take one pill a day every day for 21 days. Keep taking one pill every day until bleeding occurs for 3- 4 days in a row and then take no pills for 4 days. Restart the pill marked on the correct day on the fifth day even if you are still bleeding and take every day for at least 21 days. Only stop for a 4-day break if you have bleeding or 3-4 days in a row and you have just taken at least 21 days of pills.

▪ **Extended Use (63/4 or 63/7)**

Take one pill a day for 9 weeks (3 packs of pills/63 days) and then take no pills for either 4 or 7 days. You will usually have a withdrawal bleed during the pill-free break. Start taking the pill again on the fifth or eighth day even if you are still bleeding.

Missed one pill?

If you miss one pill anywhere in the pack don't worry you are still protected against pregnancy, even if you have had unprotected sex. You do not need emergency contraception.

Missed two or more pills?

- Take the most recent missed pill
- Continue taking the remaining pills
- Use condoms or abstain from sex for 7 days.

If you missed 2 or more pills in week one of the pack (days 1-7) and have had any unprotected sex during that time or in the pill free week you should **use emergency contraception**. You can get this free from any pharmacy in Scotland.

If you missed two or more pills in week three (days 15-21) you should finish the pills in your pack and start the next pack the next day. **Do not have a pill free week.** You do not need emergency contraception.

If you are sick

If you vomit within 2 hours of taking a pill, take another. If vomiting continues or you have severe diarrhoea for more than 72 hours your protection is reduced, and you should follow the missed pill rules.

Other medicines

Certain medicines, including the herbal remedy St John's Wort, can reduce the effectiveness of the pill. Check with your doctor whether you need any extra contraception.

If you change to a different pill, find out whether the missed pill advice is the same.

Safer sex

The combined oral contraceptive pill does not protect you from sexually transmitted infection. Use condoms with new partners and test regularly.

If you have any problems, do not hesitate to contact us.

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