

Progestin-Only Oral Contraceptive Pills (POP's) FACT SHEET

Progestin-only oral contraceptive pills (POPs) are a form of daily birth control. The pills contain a naturally-occurring hormone, progesterone. POPs work to prevent pregnancy by preventing the egg from being released from the ovary, and also by changing the cervical mucus to prevent sperm from reaching an egg.

A prescription for POPs is required from your health care provider. POPs must be taken every day, at the same time each day, to work properly. POPs are less effective when not taken perfectly. For the typical women using POPs, it is 91% effective at preventing pregnancy (9 pregnancies in 100 women using the ring for a year).

What to do in case of missed pills:

- If you miss one pill, take the pill as soon as you remember even if it means taking two pills together. Continue taking your pills as usual. No back-up contraception is needed.
- If you miss two pills, take the pill as soon as you remember even if it means taking two pills together. Do not take any earlier missed pills. Use condoms or abstain for the next 7 days.
 - If you have had unprotected intercourse, ask your health care provider about emergency contraception

POPs do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms are the best way for sexually active people to reduce the risk of infection. Always use a condom to prevent STIs.

Advantages of POPs:

- Decreased pain with periods and/or lighter menstrual periods – for some women, menstrual periods stop completely
- Nothing to do right before sex (to prevent pregnancy)
- May improve PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms
- Can decrease risk of uterine (endometrial) cancer
- Ability to become pregnant returns quickly when you stop taking POPs
- Can use immediately after giving birth, and when breastfeeding

Disadvantages of POPs:

- Must take a pill every day, at the same time each day
- May have irregular menstrual bleeding or spotting, or may not have a period at all
- Side effects – POPs are generally well-tolerated, but some women experience side effects such as breast tenderness, or change in mood. Most of these symptoms improve with time.

POPs cannot be used by women who:

- Have abnormal vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated
- Have severe liver disease
- Currently have, or have a history of breast cancer
- POPs may interact with certain epilepsy (anti-seizure) or anti-retroviral medications

Tell your health care provider if you have any of these risk factors or conditions, or of any other past or current medical problems or concerns. Your clinician will evaluate your history to help you decide if POPs are the correct choice for you.

Warning signs – Call your health care provider if you:

- Think you are pregnant
- Have been, or might have been, exposed to and STI
- Have new or worsening headaches
- Have depression or change in mood

Regular physical examinations for routine health care, STI and cancer screening are strongly recommended.