

Family Planning

Welfare Association of NT Inc.

ABN 38 812 238 738

Family Planning Welfare Association of the NT Inc exists to provide quality health care and education services in sexual and reproductive health

COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

What is 'The Pill'?

The Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill (COCP) contains both oestrogen & progesterone hormones. The Pill does not protect you from STI's.

How does it work?

COCP works by stopping fertilisation in two ways:

- Stops ovulation / prevents the egg from being released from the ovary
- Makes the mucus in your cervix thicker and stickier so that sperm are prevented from entering the uterus / womb

Advantages of Taking COCP

- Minimises your chance of pregnancy if taken correctly
- You can monitor periods; periods will be regular and often lighter.
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) problems are often a lot less.
- Reduces your chances of serious infections in the pelvis, anaemia, benign breast lumps and cysts on the ovaries.
- Acne will often improve.
- Easily reversible

Early Side Effects

These may occur in the first 3 months:

- Slight bleeding or spotting (break through bleeding)
- Slight increase in your weight
- Tender breasts
- Nausea / feeling sick
- Feeling bloated

Reduce the side effects by taking it with food or at night.

Side Effects That Might Worry You

If these happen contact your doctor or your Family Planning clinic if you are worried

- Headaches
- Loss or decreased sexual feeling
- Periods stopping
- Feeling depressed
- Vaginitis or Thrush
- Skin discolouration (chloasma)

Serious, but Not Very Common Side Effects

Thrombosis (blood clots)

If you have any of the following warning signs contact your GP/doctor or local Family Planning clinic

- Severe and sudden chest pain
- Headache
- Pain in the lower leg
- Swelling of either leg
- Sudden onset of blurred vision
- Loss of vision

Before being prescribed the COCP a careful medical history will be taken by your health professional. Of particular concern are women over 35 years of age who smoke cigarettes as there is an increase risk of thrombosis

28 Day Packet

- Start the first course of the Pill on the first day of your period.
- Take the Pill from the week long coloured section of the packet which matches that day of the week.
- The first Pill might be a hormone pill or a sugar pill.
- Take a pill every day at exactly the same time. Choose a time to suit you and when you are most likely to remember.
- You will be protected once you have taken 7 consecutive hormone pills.
- Follow the arrows around the packet until you have finished that packet.
- Your period will probably start during the time you are taking sugar pills.
- *Do not* stop taking the Pill - continue straight on to the next packet starting this in the same place as you began the first.

Common Questions

What If I Forget a Pill?

Take it as soon as you remember, however if you are more than 24 hours late with any pill use another method of contraception as well for the next 7 days (e.g. condoms/abstinence) until you have taken 7 days of hormone pills in a row. **This is called the 7 day rule.** If these 7 days ("*unprotected*" 7 days) run beyond the end of the hormone pills finish them, and start the hormone pills in the next packet immediately. This means you will miss the sugar pills so; your period will not come at the usual time but will be delayed until the next hormone-pill free week.

What if I don't get my period?

If you miss a period, and you have followed all instructions, it is unlikely that you're pregnant. Continue to take the Pill as usual but if you miss a second period, or feel that you could be pregnant, purchase a home pregnancy test available from supermarkets or pharmacies and do the test. If positive consult your doctor or FPWNT nurse as soon as possible.

What if I get an upset stomach?

If you have vomiting or diarrhoea, use another method of contraception (e.g. condoms) until vomiting/diarrhoea has ceased and for the next 7 days after.

Remember the 7 / 7 day rule

What if I have to take other medicines?

Some medicines can reduce the effectiveness of the COCP. Please talk to your doctor if you are taking:

- Vitamin C
- Antibiotics
- Anti-epileptics
- TB drugs

Remember the 7 day rule!!

Will I put on weight with the Pill?

Some hormones can change your appetite. Remember this if you're eating more than usual on the pill.

What if I start to bleed?

If you have any unexpected bleeding when you are taking the hormone pills do not stop taking the Pill. The bleeding will usually settle within the first 2/12 months. If you are concerned ring your doctor or FPWNT nurse for advice.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Make daily pill taking a routine - *like brushing your teeth* and you are less likely to forget it.
- You do not need 'a break' or 'a rest' from the Pill every year.
- If you decide to stop taking the Pill, but do not want to get pregnant, you will need to use another method of contraception. If you have breakthrough bleeding while taking the active pills, do not stop taking the Pill but continue the pack as usual. Check with your doctor if the bleeding continues

REMEMBER – to prevent pregnancy the pill needs to be taken correctly

**For further information please call our
Client Information & Support Service
ph 89480144**

or

NT Health Direct 1800 022 222

or

visit www.fpwnt.com.au