

Progestin-only Birth Control Pills

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Progestin-only pills, also called mini-pills, are one type of birth control. They are different from regular (combination) birth control pills in two ways:

- Mini-pills have only one hormone (progestin). Regular birth control pills have two hormones (progestin and estrogen).
- There are no hormone-free pills (spacer pills) in mini-pill packs. This means that there are no breaks between pill packs.

How Mini-pills Work

Mini-pills can prevent you from getting pregnant by:

- thickening the mucus in your cervix, making it harder for sperm to reach and fertilize an egg
- changing the lining of your uterus (womb) so it is less likely that a pregnancy will occur
- preventing ovulation (the release of an egg), about 50 percent of the time.

The Success Rate of Mini-pills

Mini-pills are 99.5 percent effective. If you take them late or forget to take them, mini-pills are only 95 percent effective.

Advantages of Mini-pills

For all women:

- They are very safe.
 - You can take them if you cannot or should not use regular birth control pills because of a history of blood clots or high blood pressure, or if you smoke and are older than age 35.
 - You may notice fewer side effects than if you took regular birth control pills.
- Your fertility returns as soon as you stop taking them.
- You can stop taking them at any time during the pack. Use a backup birth control method (such as condoms) the next day and thereafter if you still do not want to get pregnant.

For breastfeeding women:

- They will not harm your baby.
- They might help increase your milk production.
- You can begin to take them as early as 3 to 6 weeks after having your baby.

Disadvantages of Mini-pills

- You must take mini-pills at the same time every day for them to be the most effective. Taking a mini-pill even 3 hours late can increase your risk of getting pregnant.
- If you take a mini-pill more than 3 hours late, you will need to use a backup birth control method for 48 hours.

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- If you have unprotected sex after taking a mini-pill late or forgetting to take it, you will be at risk for getting pregnant.
- There are some side effects:
 - irregular menstrual bleeding
 - spotting or heavy bleeding
 - irregular cycles (shorter or longer times between periods)
 - headache, breast tenderness, nausea (upset stomach) and dizziness (These are less common side effects).
- There can be some medicine interactions.
 - For example, anti-seizure and tuberculosis medicines can make mini-pills less effective.
 - Tell your health care provider or pharmacist that you are taking mini-pills before you start any new medicine.
- Mini-pills do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Use latex condoms to protect yourself. STDs can happen to anyone who is sexually active.

How to Take Mini-pills

- Start the first pack on the first day of a menstrual period. Use a backup birth control method for 48 hours.
- Take 1 mini-pill every day, even during your period.
- **It is very important to take your mini-pill at the same time every day.**
 - Varying the time by even a few hours greatly increases your risk of getting pregnant.
 - Since many people have sex at bedtime, you may want to take your mini-pill in the late afternoon or early evening. It takes about 4 hours for the mucus in your cervix to thicken and create the most effective barrier against sperm.

If You Miss Taking a Mini-pill

- If a mini-pill is 3 or more hours late, take it as soon as you remember. Then take the next mini-pill at the regular time.
- Use a backup method of birth control for 48 hours.
- If you have unprotected sex after taking a mini-pill late or forgetting to take it, call your health care provider.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you:

- have severe abdominal pain
- have vaginal bleeding for more than 7 days
- have unusual or sudden menstrual period changes
- do not have a menstrual period for 45 days
- have any questions or concerns.