

## BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

Combination oral contraceptives (birth control pills) contain two female hormones: estrogen and progesterone. Taking one of these pills every day prevents the normal release of an egg from the ovary each month. If an egg is not released, a woman cannot become pregnant.

### TYPES OF BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

There are many types of combination birth control pills. Some types have pills for 21 days, some for 24 days, some for 28 days, and some for three months. There are also different versions and doses of hormones in different products. You must follow the directions exactly for taking the pill.

There are different ways to start birth control pills:

- Sunday start
  - Begin your first pack of pills by taking the first pill on the first Sunday after your menstrual period begins (even if you are still menstruating).
  - Continue taking one pill every day. When you have taken the last pill in the pack (on a Saturday), start a new pack the next day (Sunday). Do NOT skip any days between packs.
  - Your period should start during the last week of each pack of pills.
- Day 1 start
  - Begin your first pack on the first day of your period.
  - Continue taking one pill every day. When you have taken the last pill in the pack, start a new pack the next day. Do NOT skip any days between packs.
  - Your period should start during the last row of pills in each pack that you take.
- Quick start
  - Take your first pill on the day that you get your pack.
  - Continue taking one pill every day. When you have taken the last pill in the pack, start a new pack the next day. Do NOT skip any days between packs.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE TAKING BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

- Try to take your pill at the same time every day. This will help you remember to take the pills. It will also help keep hormone levels steady.
- Use a backup method of birth control (such as condoms and spermicide) until you have been taking the pill for 2 weeks.
- Your risk of pregnancy increases when you miss any pills.
  - If you forget one pill, take it as soon as you remember, even if it is the next day. Take the next pill on time.
  - If you miss two pills, take two pills daily for two days. Then take one pill a day. Use an additional method of contraception (condoms, spermicide) until your next period starts.
  - If you miss three or more pills in a row, stop taking your pills. Call the office that prescribed your pills for an appointment and use another method of birth control until you come in.

- **Use condoms, even though you are taking birth control pills, for protection against sexually transmitted disease until you have a long-term, single-partner relationship.**
- If you have bleeding between periods for several cycles you may need a different pill. Call the office that prescribed your pills for an appointment.
- Periods tend to be shorter and lighter while you are taking birth control pills.
- If you miss your period completely and have not missed any pills, continue taking your pills.
- If you have missed any pills or have missed two periods in a row, you may be pregnant. Do not start new pack until you have a pregnancy test.
- Any time you are seen for medical reasons, be sure to mention that you are taking birth control pills. This is particularly important if you are admitted to the hospital, having surgery, or if another medicine is prescribed for you.

### **SOME ADVANTAGES OF BIRTH CONTROL PILLS**

- Birth control pills are up to 99% effective in preventing pregnancy when taken correctly.
- The hormones in the pills may offer protection against fibrocystic breast disease, fibroadenomas of the breast, ovarian cysts, cancer of the uterus, and pelvic inflammatory disease (an infection of the female reproductive system).
- The pills are usually safe.
- Periods become regular and usually shorter and menstrual cramps may be less severe.
- This method of birth control remains effective during spontaneous sexual activity. That is, you do not have to plan to have condoms or spermicide on hand and remember to use them in order to prevent pregnancy. *However, you must use a condom to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.*

### **SOME DISADVANTAGES OF BIRTH CONTROL PILLS**

- You must see a doctor to prescribe the pills are prescribed.
- The hormones in the pills have some rare but potentially serious side effects. These side effects include high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, blood clot, liver problems, and worsening of headaches.
- Women who smoke have an increased risk of side effects.
- Women with certain medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, clotting problems, and liver disease cannot take the pill.
- A woman has to remember to take a pill every day and must carry pills with her when she is away from home.
- This method of birth control provides no protection against sexually transmitted diseases.
- The pills are one of the more expensive methods of birth control.

### **CALL OUR OFFICE FOR AN APPOINTMENT OR ADVICE**

#### **Immediately about:**

- Pain, swelling, and redness in the calf of one of your legs
- Shortness of breath, sharp chest pain, or coughing up blood
- Blurred vision or slurred speech
- Severe headaches
- Severe abdominal pain

#### **During office hours about:**

- Jaundice (yellow eyes and skin)
- Numbness or tingling
- Increasing headaches
- Severe mood changes

**REMEMBER: BIRTH CONTROL PILLS DO NOT PROTECT AGAINST STDs OR AIDS. THE MALE PARTNER SHOULD WEAR A CONDOM EVEN IF THE FEMALE PARTNER IS TAKING BIRTH CONTROL PILLS!**