

Birth Control Pills



- **How Do They Work?**
 - Birth control pills contain **estrogen** and **progestin** that act like natural hormones in the body. They send a message to the **ovary** not to release an **egg**. Since pregnancy requires an **egg** and **sperm** to meet, it is very unlikely to get pregnant on pills if they are taken each day. When taken correctly, they are one of the most effective **birth control** methods.

- **Are They Safe?**
 - Today's pills are very safe. In fact, for most women, it is far safer to take the pill than it is to deliver a baby. In healthy women who do not smoke, there appears to be no increased risk of **heart attack**. There may be a small risk of **blood clots** and **stroke**, but this is controversial. As for cancer, taking the pill does not increase your risk of getting cancer over your life time-it actually protects you against certain cancers.

- **What Are The Side Effects?**
 - Taking the pill may cause minor side effects which vary from woman to woman. For some women, a small amount of bleeding can happen between **periods**. This is usually not harmful and usually disappears by the third month on pills.
 - Another temporary side effect can be some **nausea**. This can happen in the first two months on pills, Taking the pill just before bed or taking it with a meal can help.
 - As for weight changes, **most pill users have no weight change at all**. A woman who has weight change of more than 4-5 pounds, may need to change to a different pill. There are many pills on the market to choose from.

□ **What Are The Health Benefits Of The Pill?**

- Protects against:
 - ❖ Ovarian cancer
 - ❖ Endometrial cancer
 - ❖ Painful or irregular periods
 - ❖ Iron deficiency anemia
 - ❖ Cysts on ovaries and breasts

- The Truth About The Pill
 - ❖ Does **not** cause birth defects
 - ❖ Does **not** harm your future fertility (your ability to have a baby when you want one)
 - ❖ Does **not** have to be stopped so your body can rest
 - ❖ Does **not** stunt growth or cause weight gain

□ **What About Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections and HIV/AIDS While Taking Birth Control Pills?**

- Pills do not give any protection against sexually transmitted diseases/infections and the HIV virus. Women who want to protect their health and future, should use condoms along with the pill. Using condoms will lessen the chance of getting cervical cancer, a possible result of having contracted the HPV virus from sexual intercourse.

□ **What Do I Need To Know About Taking The Pill?**

- It is very important to take your pill at the same time every day. Choose the most convenient time of day for you, and then be sure to take your pill at that time each day.
- Have trouble remembering? Put your pills in a place that you will see, have a partner remind you, put them under your pillow or buy a wrist watch!

□ **When Do I Start?**

- There are **two** ways to start:
 - ❖ either on the very *first* day of your period or
 - ❖ on the Sunday *after* your period.

- Depending on what brand of pill you are given. Clinic staff will assist you in which method you are using and starting your pill schedule. It is necessary to use a back-up method, like condoms or abstinence for 7 days after the missed pill(s). If you do have *unprotected sex* within 7 days, you may need to get **Emergency Contraception**.

□ **What If I Am Taking Other Medications?**

- When you are on birth control pills, always check with your health provider before taking any prescription medication. Some medications such as many antibiotics and even the herbal supplement St. John's Wort can take away your pregnancy protection. Use back up protection like condoms while on the medication and for 7 days after that. When in doubt, call us!
- If you have any questions or there are things that you don't like about your pills please call before *stopping* your pills. Most side effects are minor and not harmful to you. Sometimes a pill change is needed and very helpful.