

HOW TO USE THE PROGESTIN-ONLY BIRTH CONTROL PILL

(Containing only a Progestin)

Important Points to Remember Before You Start Taking Your Pills:

- 1. Be sure to read these directions**
before you start taking your pills or anytime you are not sure what to do.
- 2. The right way to take the pill is to take one pill every day at the same time.**
If you take a pill more than 2 to 3 hours late you could get pregnant. If you miss a pill you are even more likely to get pregnant. With progestin-only pills it is **very important** that you take your pill **at the same time** every day.
- 3. Start the next pack of pills the day after the last pack is finished.**
There is no break between packs. Always have your next pack of pills ready.
- 4. You may have spotting or light bleeding between periods.**
Do not stop taking you pills if this happens.
- 5. If you have vomiting or diarrhea, for any reason, or if you take some medicines, including some antibiotics, your pills may not work as well.**
Use a backup method, such as condoms or vaginal spermicide (foam, film, or suppositories), until you check with your health care provider or clinic. Whenever you see a health care provider, tell them that you are taking progestin-only birth control pills. (If you are worried about other people finding out that you are taking birth control pills, talk to the health care provider about this.)
- 6. If you have trouble remembering to take the pill,**
talk to your health care provider or clinic about how to make pill taking easier or about using another method of birth control.
- 7. If you have any questions or are unsure about the information on this sheet,**
call your health care provider or clinic.
- 8. To avoid running out of pills,** call your health care provider or clinic while you are taking your next to the last pack of pills or when you start your last pack of pills.

Before You Start Taking Your Pills:

- 1. Decide what time of day you want to take your pill.**
With progestin-only pills it is **very important** that you take your pill **at the same time** every day.
- 2. Look at your pill pack.**
Whether it has 28 pills or 42 pills, all of the pills are the same color, and all of the pills are “active” (contain hormone). You take one pill each day at the same time. You start the next pack of pills as soon as you finish the last one. There are no days off between packs.
- 3. Also find**
 - 1) where on the pack to start taking pills,
 - 2) in what order to take the pills (follow the arrows), and
 - 3) the week numbers.
- 4. Be sure you have ready at all times another kind of birth control,** such as condoms or vaginal spermicide (foam, film, or suppositories), to use as a backup in case you take pills late or miss pills, and **an extra, full pack of pills.**

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When to Start the *First* Pack of Pills:

1. It is best to take your **first progestin-only pill** on the **first day** of your menstrual period.
2. If you decide to take your **first progestin-only pill** on **another day**, use a **backup method**, such as condoms or vaginal spermicide (foam, film, or suppositories), every time you have sex during **the next 48 hours**.
3. If you have had a **miscarriage** or an **abortion**, you can start progestin-only pills **the next day**.
4. If you are **fully breast-feeding** (not giving your baby any food or formula), you should start taking your pills by **6 weeks** after delivery.
5. If you are **partially breast-feeding** (giving your baby some food or formula), you should start taking your pills by **3 weeks** after delivery.
6. If you are switching to progestin-only pills from combined pills, take your first progestin-only pill the day after you take the last “active” combined pill. Do not take any reminder pills in a 28-pill pack of combined pills. Do not wait to get your period after the end of a 21-pill pack of combined pills.
7. If you are switching from one brand of progestin-only pills to another, you can start the new pills at any point in the old pack.

What to Do during the Month:

1. **Take one pill at the same time every day until the pack is empty.**
Do not skip pills even if you are spotting or bleeding between monthly periods.
Do not skip pills even if you do not have sex very often.
Do not skip pills even if you do not get your period every month. (Anytime it has been more than 45 days since your last period, it is a good idea to do a pregnancy test.)
2. **When you finish a pack of pills** (whether you are continuing with the same pill or switching your brand of progestin-only pills), start the next pack on the day after you finish your last pack.
Do not wait any days between packs.

What to Do If You Miss Pills or Take Them Late:

- If you are more than **3 hours late** taking a progestin-only pill:
 1. Take it as soon as you remember it.
 2. Then go back to taking your next pill at your regular time. This means that you may take two pills in 1 day.
 3. You **may become pregnant** if you have sex in the **48 hours** after you take a pill more than 3 hours late. You **must** use another birth control method, such as condoms or vaginal spermicide (foam, film, or suppositories), as a backup for those 48 hours.
- If you **miss one or more** progestin-only pills:
 1. Take one pill as soon as you remember that you have missed a pill.
 2. Then go back to taking your next pill at your regular time. This means that you may take two pills in 1 day. (If you missed 2 or more pills, you take only one of the missed pills as soon as you remember. You don't have to make up the others.)
 3. You **may become pregnant** if you have sex in the **48 hours** after you miss one or more pills. You **must** use another birth control method, such as condoms or vaginal spermicide (foam, film, or suppositories), as a backup for those 48 hours.

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“Fail-Safe” Instructions:

••• **Finally, if you are still not sure what to do about the pills you have missed:**

1. Use a **backup method** any time you have sex.
2. **Keep taking one progestin-only pill each day** until you can reach your health care provider or clinic.

What to Do If You Miss Your Period:

1. It is common for your periods to be irregular while you are taking progestin-only pills. You may have spotting or bleeding between periods. Your periods may be longer or shorter than usual. They may be lighter than usual. It is unusual for them to be heavier. The time between the start of one period and the start of the next may change from month to month. Rarely, some women have no periods at all while using progestin-only pills. Many women continue to have regular periods.
2. Even though research has shown that progestin-only pills do not cause harm to the unborn baby, it is always best not to take any drugs or medicine that you don't need when you are pregnant. If you think that you might be pregnant, **call** your health care provider or clinic **right away** so that a pregnancy test can be done.
3. **You should get a pregnancy test:**
 - 1) if your period is late and you took one or more pills late (or missed taking them) and had sex without a backup method;
 - 2) anytime it has been more than **45 days** since your last period; or
 - 3) if you are having **symptoms of pregnancy** (nausea, tiredness, breast swelling or soreness, etc.), even if your period isn't late.
4. If you are **pregnant**, you should **stop** taking your pills.
5. If you are **not pregnant**, you may **continue** taking your pills.

Remember the **danger signs** that could be warnings of serious pill problems. If they occur, **call** your health care provider or clinic **immediately!** (If you cannot reach your health care provider or the clinic, go to your local hospital's Emergency Department.)

Danger Signs: ACHES

Abdominal (Belly) Pain

Chest Pain

Headaches

Eye Problems

Swelling or Pain in Leg or Arm

Remember that birth control pills do not provide protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. In order to reduce your risk of getting STDs, you must practice “safer-sex”--for example, using condoms in addition to taking birth control pills.