



Cascade Women's Health
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS

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Birth Control Pills

Birth Control Pills Instructions

1. Start your pill on _____
2. Take one pill every day in order. You will be on the hormone pills the first three weeks (21 days) and on blank placebo pills for at least part of the last week (3-7 days depending on your brand of pills. You take this last week of pills as reminders to you stay on schedule. Your menstrual period will occur the week you are taking the last few pills. Your period may not last all seven days and will probably be lighter and shorter than your normal period is. Even though you are not taking the active hormone pills for the entire last week you are still protected from pregnancy. When you finish one package of pills start your next package the following day. You will take a pill every day.
3. During the first three weeks be sure to use a back up method of birth control such as foam or condoms!
4. Take your pills with some regular activity such as first thing in the morning, before eating a meal, or at bedtime. Consider taping a note to your bathroom mirror to remind yourself if you think that you are likely to forget. Many women set their cell phones to remind them.
5. Take your pill about the same time each day. A common reason for irregular bleeding is taking the pills later on weekends than during the week. If this is a problem, try taking the pill at a time you can take them more consistently. Even an hour late can trigger bleeding in a sensitive woman, especially with the current low dose pills.
6. Check your pill package each day to make sure that you took yesterday's pill. If you miss one pill, take the forgotten one as soon as you remember it and take today's pill at the regular time. It is OK to take two pills at once.
7. If you miss two pills in a row, take one missed pill as soon as you remember in addition to the usual pill for that day. Then take two pills the next day as well to get caught up. Use back up birth control (foam & condoms) for the next three weeks because you may not be protected.
8. Some women do not have periods while taking birth control pills. However, if you think that you might be pregnant call us. We may have you come in for a pregnancy test. You can also run a home pregnancy test available at any pharmacy without a prescription

9. Some women on the pill will have spotting or light bleeding between their periods. This is called breakthrough bleeding. It is common when women first start taking birth control and normally stops by the second or the third pill packs. If you have breakthrough bleeding, continue to take your pills as directed. Call the advice nurse if the bleeding is heavier than a normal period, if it persists for more than three cycles, or if it becomes bothersome. Do not stop taking your pills.
10. If you are prescribed antibiotic while you are on birth control pills you may need to use back up contraception (foam & condoms) for three weeks. Please check with us or the pharmacy filling your antibiotic prescription whether this is necessary. Don't take St. John's Wart because this could make the birth control pill less effective and increase the risk of a surprise pregnancy.
11. Call us at 503-274-9936 if you have any questions or problems.

Extended Cycle Option:

You may have heard about taking birth control pills in a way to get your period every three months. You can do this with your current pills if you'd like. Alternatively, we can prescribe a pill prepackaged to make it easier.

To extend your cycle on your regular birth control pill's, take the active pills until you get to the placebo pills. In some packs the active pills are the first three rows, others it can have some in the fourth row. Then instead of using the placebo pill, start a new pack without skipping any active pills. When you get to the placebo pills in the next pill pack skip again, going into the third pack without a break. At the end of the third pack, take the placebo row. During that week you will have your period. If you are unsure about this contact our office and we will be happy to help you.

You may have some irregular spotting the first three months of extended cycle. After that spotting should go away. However, not everyone can successfully use the extended cycle. Some women will continue having bothersome irregular spotting and may want to go back to regular cycle.

Your insurance company may need to be notified you are on extended cycle birth control pills in order for your prescription benefit to provide coverage for an extra pack yearly.