

# What should I discuss with my provider before taking Oral Contraception Pills (OCP)?

**Do not use OCP if you are pregnant because OCP can cause birth defects. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or if you miss two menstrual periods in a row. If you recently had a baby, talk to your doctor about when to start OCP, especially if you are nursing.**

**Do NOT use OCP if you ever had:**

- a history of a stroke, blood clot, or circulation problems;
- breast or uterine cancer;
- abnormal vaginal bleeding;
- liver disease or liver cancer;
- severe migraine headaches; or
- jaundice caused by birth control pills.

**Before using OCP, tell your doctor if you've had any of the following conditions.**

- high blood pressure, heart disease, congestive heart failure, angina (chest pain due to poor blood flow), or a history of heart attack;
- gallbladder disease;
- seizures or epilepsy;
- history of irregular menstrual cycles;
- migraines of any kind
- history of abnormal mammogram.

**How should I take OCP?**

ALWAYS report OCP use at your medical visits and if you have surgery or medical procedures. Take this medication exactly as prescribed for you. Do not take larger amounts, or longer than recommended by your doctor or nurse practitioner.

- Take your first pill on the first day of your period OR on the first Sunday after your period begins (follow your doctor's instructions). It's OK to start your OCP even if you are still having your period on the day you're scheduled to start
- Use back-up birth control, such as condoms, for the first month (first pack)
- The 28-day pill pack contains seven "reminder" pills to keep you on a regular cycle. Your period will usually begin while you are using these reminder pills.
- You may have irregular bleeding, especially the first 3 months. Don't skip pills or use extra pills if this occurs. Tell your doctor if bleeding continues or is heavy.
- Take one pill every day, no more than 24 hours apart. When the pills run out, start a new pack the following day. You may get pregnant if you do not use your OCP regularly. Get your prescription refilled before you run out of pills completely. CALL at least 24 hours in advance and NOT on a Friday if you need them on the weekend.

- Your doctor will need to see you on a regular basis while you are using OCP. Do not miss any appointments.
- Store your OCP at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

## **What if I miss a dose of birth control pills?**

### **Missing a pill increases your risk of becoming pregnant!**

- If you miss one "active" pill, take two pills the next day. Then take one pill per day for the rest of the pack/month.
- If you miss two "active" pills at any time (3 in a row or total during one month/pack), take two pills per day for two days in a row. Then take one pill per day for the rest of the pack. Use back-up birth control every time you have intercourse for the rest of the pack/month
- If you miss three pills at any time (3 in a row or a total of 3 missed during one month/pack), throw out the rest of the pack & start a new pack the following Sunday. Use back up birth control every time you have intercourse for the rest of the month/pack.
- If you miss any "reminder" pills, throw them away and keep taking one pill per day until the pack is empty. You do not need back-up birth control if you miss a reminder pill.

## **What else should I know about taking my pills?**

- Smoking increases the risk of blood clots, stroke, & heart attack associated with OCPs.
- OCPs do not protect you from sexually transmitted diseases--like HIV and AIDS. Using a condoms are the only method that reduce your risk of sexually transmitted infection

## **What are the possible side effects of OCP?**

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of face/lips/tongue/throat.

Stop using OCP and call your provider immediately if you have any of these side effects:

- sudden numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body;
- confusion, eye pain/visual changes; new speech, or balance disturbances
- chest pain or pressure, nausea, sweating, general ill feeling;
- New onset or change in pattern/severity of migraine headaches;
- nausea, stomach pain, loss of appetite, dark urine, pale stools, jaundice;
- swelling in hands, ankles, or feet; or
- symptoms of depression (sleep problems, weakness, and mood changes).

Continue the medication and talk to your doctor if you have:

- nausea, vomiting, bloating, stomach cramps, changes in weight/appetite
- breast pain, tenderness, or swelling;
- freckles/darkening of facial skin; increased hair growth, loss of scalp hair
- problems with contact lenses;
- vaginal itching or discharge; changes in your menstrual periods; or

- headache, nervousness, dizziness, tired feeling.

Talk to your doctor about any symptoms that seem unusual or are bothersome.

### **What other drugs will affect my OCP?**

Some drugs can make OCP's less effective, which may result in pregnancy. Before using OCP, tell your doctor if you are using any of the following medications:

- antibiotics such as amoxicillin, ampicillin, doxycycline, minocycline, penicillin (Veetids, Pen Vee K, Bicillin), rifampin, rifabutin, tetracycline, and others;
- seizure medicines such as phenytoin (Dilantin), carbamazepine (Tegretol), felbamate (Felbatol), oxcarbazepine (Trileptal), topiramate (Topamax), or primidone (Mysoline);
- barbiturates such as amobarbital (Amytal), butabarbital, mephobarbital, secobarbital (Seconal), or phenobarbital; or
- HIV medicines
- phenylbutazone (Azolid, Butazolidin);
- St. John's wort;

For short term (2 weeks or less) of antibiotics, use backup contraception while you are using antibiotics and for at least one week after stopping the antibiotic.

There may be other drugs not listed that can affect OCPs. Tell your doctor about all vitamins, minerals, herbal products, and drugs prescribed by other doctors. Don't start a new medication without telling your doctor. The vitamin/mineral supplements provided by CHS are safe with OCP....remember to take them daily.