

COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (COCS)

(Based on Contraceptive Technology 20th edition and Pocket Guide 2019-2020)

Effectiveness: 99.7% with perfect use; 91.0% with typical use

Action: The pill contains hormones which prevent pregnancy

Advantages/Benefits:

- Take correctly and consistently for effective birth control
- Risks for certain cancers may be decreased such as endometrial and colorectal cancer
- Can use the pill until menopause if woman does not smoke
- Risks may also be lowered for having benign breast masses (masses which are not cancerous), ovarian cysts, tubal pregnancy, and pelvic inflammatory disease
- Decreased blood loss and decreased anemia may decrease menstrual cramps/pain, and more predictable menses; eliminates ovulation pain
- Acne often improves, and facial hair growth may decrease
- Sexual enjoyment may increase due to decreased fear of pregnancy and more spontaneous activity
- Some women may feel less anxious, depressed, bloated, and have fewer headaches before periods
- Prevents and treats endometriosis

Disadvantages/Risks:

- No protection against STDs or HIV (Use a condom if at risk)
- Daily pill may be stressful (especially if privacy is an issue)
- May have nausea and/or spotting, mainly during the first few cycles
- May experience headaches, breast tenderness, depression, anxiety, irritability, fatigue, mood changes, or a decreased enjoyment of sex
- Must use a back-up method if you have any question about how many pills you have missed and whether a back-up is necessary
- Blood clots may occur but are very rare
- Pills have little, if any, effect on the risk of developing breast cancer
- Women at risk for complications include smokers over 35 years old, have high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol or obesity; history of migraine headaches or new onset of headaches
- Some increased risk for gallbladder disease or liver disease with higher dose pills

Instructions:

- Follow your clinician's instructions on how to start your pills and take them daily to avoid an unwanted pregnancy and to keep periods regular
- Condoms should be used for the first seven days of the first pack of pills

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Continued

Instructions (continued):

- Have patient return in 3 months for BP check and follow up on any complaints
- Report the following problems:
 - Abdominal pain (severe)
 - Chest pain (severe), cough, shortness of breath or sharp pain on breathing in
 - Headache (severe), dizziness, weakness, or numbness, especially if one sided
 - Eye problems (vision loss or blurring), speech problems
 - Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)

Missed Pills:

- **Any amount of pills missed during the first week of pack, require using a back up method for 7 days and emergency contraception if unprotected sex during last 3 days.**
 - A. **Missed *one* pill:**
 - Take missed pill ASAP and take next pill as usual. See above.**
 - B. **Miss two or *more* pills:**
 - The most recent missed pill should be taken ASAP**
 - The remaining pills should be continued at usual time**
 - Must use back up method for 7 days**
 - Consider emergency contraception**
 - C. **If uses emergency contraceptive pills**
 - Resume taking pills in pack the next day after she finishes ECPs**