

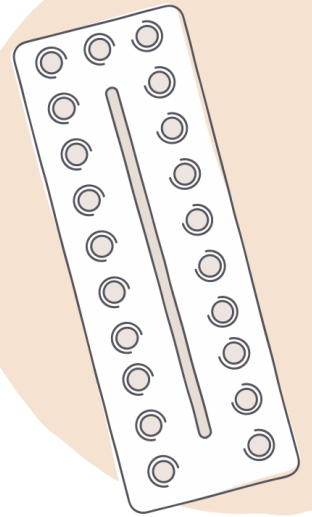
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## What to know about birth control pills

Many people use birth control pills to prevent pregnancy or to control their cycle. Here are the top things to know about using birth control pills.

### Common side effects

Most birth control pills use a combination of estrogen and progestin hormones. There are many different kinds with different amounts and types of each hormone. If you are having extra bleeding, acne, or other symptoms, ask your midwife about switching to a different type. Usually these symptoms will go away after 2-3 months.



### What to look out for

Birth control very slightly raises your risk of blood clots. Call your midwife or go to the ER if you have any of these symptoms:

- Leg pain, swelling, and redness, especially on one leg
- Weakness or numbness on one side of your body
- Bad headache
- Vision problems
- Chest pain

## Frequently asked questions

### Who should not take birth control pills?

Some people cannot safely use pills that have estrogen. If you have any of these conditions, please talk with your midwife before taking this medicine:

- Liver disease
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Blood clots (or a family history of blood clots) or stroke at an early age
- Migraine with aura (headache while you are seeing lights in your vision, ringing noise, burning pain or numbness in your body, or twitches)
- Breast cancer
- Over the age of 35 and a smoker

### Is it ok to take other medications with my pills?

Certain medications and supplements can interfere with birth control pills. Always check with your provider or pharmacist when starting a new medication, or use a backup method like condoms while taking it.

### How do I start taking birth control pills?

If you start within 5 days of your period starting, the pills will work right away to prevent pregnancy. If you start in the middle of your cycle, make sure you use a backup method like condoms for 7 days.

### What if I miss a pill?

If you miss one pill, take it as soon as you remember. If you miss two, take your pill when you remember and take the next one at the regular time. Use a backup method like condoms for 7 days. If you had unprotected sex during this time, you can use emergency contraception up to 5 days later to prevent a pregnancy. You can get this at your pharmacy or call your midwife for a prescription.

### What is emergency contraception?

**Emergency contraception** is something you can take *after* having unprotected sex to prevent you from getting pregnant. These are *not* abortion pills. There are two main kinds. The most common is pills (Plan B® or Ella®). The pills work by stopping you from releasing an egg. You can get Plan B® over the counter at most pharmacies. This works best in the first 3-5 days, and does

not work well for people who weigh over 150 lbs. If you weigh more than 150lbs, you can take a double dose to make it work better. You can also get a prescription pill called Ella®. Ella® works best up to 5 days after unprotected sex and it works best for people weighing up to 195lbs. The other kind is an IUD, which is placed in your uterus by a midwife or doctor. The IUD works by slowing down the egg so it doesn't reach the uterus in time and by thinning the lining of the uterus so the egg can't stick. You can keep the IUD for 7-12 years and use it as birth control if you want.

If you are in need of emergency contraception help, please contact us right away. We can help you find the right emergency contraceptive (including where to find free/sliding scale options).

### **Can I skip my period by using birth control pills?**

Many people would like to not have a period. You can safely skip your period by taking the first 3 weeks of your birth control pills then skipping the placebo pills and starting a new pack right away. Call your midwife if you want to do this so we can change your prescription for you. It can take 2-3 months for your period to stop completely, and you may have spotting once in a while. It's safe and healthy to skip your period this way if you want.