

What if I Miss Pills?

- If you miss pills, you may become pregnant and you may also have some break-through bleeding.
- If you miss one pill, take the pill as soon as you remember it. Take your next pill at the usual time. It is okay to take two pills at the same time if you forget one.
- If you miss two pills, take the most recent missed pill as soon as possible. Throw away any other missed pills. Continue taking the remaining pills at the usual time even if it means taking two pills on the same day. Some women have a little nausea when taking two pills. Use a back-up method (condoms, film, foam) until pills have been taken for 7 days in a row.
- If you forget to take your pills for three days in a row, keep taking your pills once a day and use a back-up method. Call the health department and talk to a public health nurse to find out what you need to do.



Pill Warning Signs

Health problems with pills are rare. The following are warning signs of problems. Remember the word "ACHES."

Abdominal pain (severe), indicating possible ruptured liver tumor, cyst, or tubal pregnancy.

Chest pain (sharp, crushing or heaviness), indicating possible heart attack; sudden shortness of breath, persistent cough or coughing up blood, indicating possible blood clot in the lung.

Headaches (sudden severe) or vomiting, dizziness or fainting, weakness or numbness in an arm or leg or disturbances of speech, indicating a possible stroke.

Eye problems (blurring vision, flashing lights or partial/complete loss of vision), indicating a possible clot in the eye or other blood flow problems.

Sudden leg pain in calf or thigh; or redness, heat or swelling in calf or thigh, indicating possible blood clots.

If you experience any of these warning signs, call your health care provider as soon as possible.

If you smoke – STOP! Smokers are more likely to have serious problems when taking birth control pills than nonsmokers

Birth control pills are a very good method if taken correctly! However, no method is 100% effective, except for abstinence (not having sex).

If you have any questions, call:

TAKING combined birth control pills



South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

www.scdhec.gov

*We promote and protect the health
of the public and the environment.*

Starting Your Pills

Start your pills in one of the following ways:

- Quick Start** - Start your pills today if you are not pregnant and have not had unprotected sex since your last period.
- First Day Start** - Start on the first day of your menstrual period.
- Sunday Start** - Start on the first Sunday after your menstrual period begins. If your period starts on Sunday, start your pills that same day.
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- Use a back-up method of birth control each time you have sex until you start your pills and **during the first week (seven days) of your first pack of pills.**
- Back-up methods of birth control include condoms and contraceptive film or foam.
- Some women have nausea when they first start taking pills. If you do, take the pill with food. It may help to take your pills at bedtime if you go to bed at the same time every night. If this doesn't help, don't stop your pills until you talk to a nurse at the public health department or your health care provider.
- Some women have spotting or breakthrough bleeding when they take the first 2-3 packs of pills. If you have spotting or breakthrough bleeding for longer, call the public health department and talk to the nurse.
- Read the package insert that comes with your pill pack.

Taking Your Pills

- Take one pill by mouth every day. Take it at the same time every day. It may help you remember to take your pill if you associate it with something you do at the same time every day, like brushing your teeth.
- Check your pill pack to be sure you took your pill the day before.
- As soon as you finish one pack of pills, start the next pack of pills the very next day. Never miss a day when you are taking pills.
- Mark your calendar to remind yourself when to start your next pack of pills. Some women mark their calendars each day after they take their pill.
- Use a back-up method of birth control if any of the following happen:
 - You miss taking a pill
 - You are late starting your new pill pack
 - You have severe vomiting or diarrhea
 - You have break-through bleeding or spotting
- You may need to use a back-up method if you start taking certain medicines. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist if you need to use a back up method before starting a medication. This includes over-the-counter medicines and herbal products.
- Most women have a period during the last seven pills in the pack. Many women have shorter, lighter periods when taking the pill.



- As long as you have taken your pills on time every day and have not missed any pills, if you do not have a period, you are probably not pregnant. Sometimes women skip periods when taking birth control pills.
- If you miss two periods, or if you have missed pills and do not have a period, call the public health department and ask the nurse if you need to have a pregnancy test.
- You do NOT need to take a “rest” from birth control pills. **If you stop taking your pills, you are not protected from getting pregnant!**
- If you are thinking about stopping your pills, **DO NOT stop your pills** until you talk to a nurse at the public health department.
- Birth control pills DO NOT protect you from HIV, AIDS, or other sexually transmitted diseases. Always choose your partner carefully and use a condom.
- Contact the public health department for an appointment when:

