

Skipping Periods on Birth Control

Do women on birth control need to have a period?

The short answer is: no.

Most birth control products have 3 weeks of hormones and 1 week of no hormones. Women have a period during the hormone-free week. Pill packs have placebo (no-hormone) pills during the last few days. Patch and ring users take the patch off or the ring out every 4th week. The period that happens during the hormone-free week is called withdrawal bleeding. It's a false period, and it's not needed for good health. **Skipping periods on birth control is safe.**

You can skip a period from time to time – for instance, during a vacation.

You can skip every period. This can help problems related to periods (like migraines, PMS, anemia, etc.).

If you don't want a period, just skip that hormone-free week.

Here's how:

Pill users

Most pill packs contain 21 active pills (with hormones) and 7 placebo pills (with no hormones). The placebo pills are the last few pills in the pack. To skip a period, don't take the placebo pills. Instead, go straight from the last active pill in one pack to the first active pill in the next pack.

A woman who uses 28-day packs and skips the last 7 pills of each pack will need to buy 17 packs each year. Insurance plans may not cover the extra packs.

Some pill packs contain 84 active pills and 7 placebo pills. To avoid having a period, you can skip the last 7 pills. Using these 3-month packs may cost less.

Patch users

Skip the patch-free week. To save money, you can change the patch every 9 days rather than weekly. This means that you'll use a box of 3 patches every 27 days. (The patch has more hormone than the pill or the ring. It's fine to skip a period from time to time. If you want to skip all periods, you may want to switch to the ring or pill.)

Ring users

Skip the ring-free week. To save money, you can change the ring every 35 days. (Many women find it easier to change the ring on the same date of each month.)

For more info, see:

<http://contraception.about.com/od/prescriptionoptions/p/MissingPeriods.htm>

<http://www.birth-control-comparison.info/continual-hormones.htm>