

# FACT SHEET: THE PILL

Remember,  
the pill does not  
protect you from  
Sexually  
Transmitted  
Infections or HIV.  
If you are looking  
for protection  
from STIs and  
HIV, both the  
internal  
and external  
condoms are  
great options!



## HOW DO BIRTH CONTROL PILLS WORK?

- Birth control pills contain hormones (estrogen and a progestin), similar to the ones your body makes. While you are taking these pills, they stop your ovaries from releasing eggs. Without an egg, you cannot get pregnant.
- No method of birth control is 100% effective. Seven in 100 people using the pill for a year get pregnant.

## HOW DO I START THE PILL?

- There are 2 ways to start the pill:
  - **Quick Start:** Take your first pill as soon as you get the pack.
  - **Next period:** Take your first pill soon after your next period begins.
- If you take your first pill *up to 5 days after the start of your period*, you are protected against pregnancy **right away**.
- If you take your first pill *more than 5 days after the start of your period*, you should **use condoms as back-up for the first 7 days**.
- You can get a prescription for the pill from your clinician.

## HOW DO I USE THE PILL?

- **Once you start using the pill**, take 1 pill each day.
- After you finish a pack of pills, you should start a new pack the next day. You should have **NO** day without a pill.

## WHAT IF I MISS PILLS?

- **I forgot ONE pill:** Take your pill as soon as you can.
- **I forgot TWO pills or more:** Take your pill as soon as you can. Take your next pill at the usual time. **Use a back-up birth control method for 7 days.**

## WHAT IF I STOPPED TAKING THE PILL AND HAD UNPROTECTED SEX?

- Take Emergency Contraception (EC) **right away**. EC can prevent pregnancy up to 5 days after sex, and it works better the sooner you take it.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THE PILL?

- The pill is safe and effective birth control.
- Your periods may be more regular, lighter, and shorter.
- You may have clearer skin.
- The pill lowers your risk of getting cancer of the uterus and ovaries.
- Although some people who take testosterone may prefer to avoid estrogen, the pill is safe to use.

## HOW WILL THE PILL AFFECT ME?

- You will feel about the same. In the first 2-3 months you may have nausea, bleeding between periods, and/or breast/chest pain. These problems often go away after 2-3 months. Some side effects can get better by changing to a different brand.
- After you stop taking the pill, you can get pregnant right away.

## WHERE CAN I GET THE PILL?

- You can get the pill at pharmacies with a prescription. Some pharmacies can mail you the pill.

## IS THE PILL SAFE?

- The pill is very safe. Serious problems are rare. If you have any of the symptoms below, call your clinician.
  - Leg pain, swelling, and redness
  - Weakness or numbness on 1 side of your body
  - Bad headache
  - Vision problems
  - Chest pain
- Your clinician can help you find out if these symptoms are signs of a serious problem.
- People should not take a pill with estrogen during the first 3-6 weeks after childbirth. Safer options include progestin-only and barrier methods.

