

Bleeding on Hormonal Birth Control

What is a period?	<p>A period (menses) is the time when the lining of the uterus sheds. This happens after an egg is released from the ovaries (ovulation) and is not fertilized by a sperm, or if a fertilized egg does not attach to the wall of the uterus. If neither of these things happen, hormone levels change and the lining of the uterus sheds. This typically happens every 24-38 days. Most periods last 2-7 days.</p>
Do you get a “period” on hormonal birth control?	<p>Many hormonal birth control methods prevent pregnancy by stopping ovulation. Ovulation is when your body releases an egg.</p> <p>If you use a method with estrogen and progestin, known as a combined hormonal method (CHC)—like the pill, patch, or ring—or the drospirenone progestin-only pill (Slynd), your body does not release an egg.</p> <p>The bleeding you have each month is called withdrawal bleeding. These methods were made to have withdrawal bleeding to seem like a period. Withdrawal bleeding happens during the week you use inactive (hormone-free) pills or remove the patch or ring. During this time, hormone levels go down, and you have withdrawal bleeding. This bleeding is usually lighter and shorter than the periods you had before taking the pill or using the patch or ring.</p> <p>Other hormonal methods work differently. These include the norethindrone or norgestrel progestin-only pill (Opill), the shot (Depo-Provera), the implant (Nexplanon), and the progestin IUD. These methods do not have regular withdrawal bleeding, but can cause irregular bleeding. These methods release a hormone that prevents pregnancy, and these changes in hormone levels can lead to irregular bleeding.</p>
Why does my bleeding look different on the combined pill, patch, or ring?	<p>The combined pill, patch, and ring stop ovulation and make the uterine lining thinner. For this reason, your bleeding looks and feels different than the period you had before taking CHCs. Your bleeding may be shorter and lighter, brownish instead of bright red, and spotty, or you may have no bleeding at all. Having light bleeding or no bleeding while using hormonal birth control is not harmful to your body.</p>
Is skipping periods on birth control safe?	<p>Yes. You don’t need to bleed each month while on CHCs. In fact, many people use the combined pill, patch, or ring to help skip or stop their monthly period as that may help to improve their quality of life. With the pill and monthly ring, you may be able to avoid having any withdrawal bleeding. You may be able to have some months without bleeding with the yearly ring and patch. Learn more about avoiding your withdrawal bleeding with our Skipping Periods on Birth Control resource.</p>
Why is my period late?	<p>In the first few months of starting or stopping a birth control method, your bleeding may be hard to predict as your body adjusts to the changes in hormones. Not bleeding can sometimes mean you are pregnant. If you think there is a chance you are pregnant, call your clinician or take a home pregnancy test.</p>
When should I see my clinician about bleeding on birth control?	<p>If your bleeding pattern bothers you.</p> <p>If you would like to change to a new birth control method that requires a prescription.</p> <p>If you have really heavy bleeding, such as bleeding for longer than 7 days or soaking through a pad or tampon every hour.</p>
What happens to your bleeding after you stop hormonal birth control?	<p>After stopping hormonal birth control, you can ovulate and start getting a period again within a few weeks to a few months, depending on the method. Sometimes it may take a while for your bleeding pattern to go back to how it was before you started birth control. Compared to other methods, after stopping the shot it may take longer for your period to return (for some, as long as a year and a half).</p> <p>If you are using a hormonal birth control method to prevent pregnancy, it is safe to stop it at any time, but talk to your clinician if you have questions about ovulation, irregular bleeding, or periods after stopping a method.</p>

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How do different types of birth control affect bleeding patterns?

Birth Control Method	Impact on Bleeding
<p>Combined Hormonal Contraceptives (CHCs) (pill, patch, ring)</p> 	<p>CHCs cause withdrawal bleeding during the hormone-free week (when you take placebo pills or remove the patch/ring).</p> <p>They can cause lighter, shorter, more regular, or less painful bleeding.</p> <p>They may cause spotting in the first few months as your body adjusts to the hormones.</p>
<p>Progestin IUD (Liletta®, Mirena®, Skyla®, and others)</p> 	<p>The progestin IUD may cause lighter, shorter, or less painful bleeding. Some people have ongoing spotting while using it. Some people have no monthly bleeding at all.</p> <p>It may cause spotting in the first few months as your body adjusts to the hormones.</p>
<p>Implant (Nexplanon®)</p> 	<p>The implant causes bleeding to change. Many people have frequent spotting that is hard to predict.</p> <p>It may cause lighter, shorter, or less painful bleeding. Some people have more bleeding or no monthly bleeding.</p>
<p>Progestin-Only Pills (Slynd, Camila, NorQD Opill®)</p> 	<p>Right now, there are two types of progestin-only pills available, made with two types of progestin. One type has either norethindrone or norgestrel. It can cause bleeding or spotting that is hard to predict. The other has drospirenone and each pack has hormone-free pills. You may still have bleeding that is hard to predict, but it is less likely.</p> <p>It may cause lighter, spotting, or no monthly bleeding at all.</p>
<p>The Shot (Depo-Provera®)</p> 	<p>The shot causes bleeding to change. It may cause spotting, no bleeding at all, or longer bleeding.</p> <p>May take up to a year and a half for your period to return to normal after stopping the shots.</p>