

Progestin-Only Pill (The Mini-Pill)

What is the progestin-only pill (POP)?

- POP:
 - is a type of birth control pill
 - only contains one hormone (progestin). The most common type of birth control pill contains two hormones (estrogen and progestin).
 - comes as a 28-day pack. There are hormones in all 28 pills. There are no hormone-free pills.

How well does POP work?

- With typical use, POP is about 90–95 percent effective.
- With perfect use, POP is about 99.5 percent effective.
- For POP to work best, take one pill **at the same time** (within 3 hours) every day.

How does POP work?

- POP helps prevent pregnancy by:
 - decreasing the cervical mucus and making it thicker
 - making the lining of the uterus thin
 - slowing down the egg in the fallopian tube
 - sometimes stopping an egg from being released

Who might use POP?

- POP might be used by women who:
 - are over 35 and smoke
 - have migraine headaches
 - need birth control without estrogen
 - have side effects from other types of birth control
 - are breastfeeding (and the baby is more than 6 weeks old)

How do I take POP?

- To start POP for the first time, take the first pill during the **first five days** of your period. The first month you take POP, use another method of birth control (e.g., condoms) for the first 48 hours.
- If you start the pack at any other time, use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) for 48 hours.
- Take one pill **at the same time** (within 3 hours) every day. You are more likely to get pregnant if you take your pill late or miss a day.
- **When your pill pack is done, start a new pack the next day.** There is no break between pill packs. Before you finish a pill pack, make sure you have a new pack (so you will start your new pack on time).

What if I forget to take a pill?

- If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember (even if that means you will take two pills in one day).
- Use another method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or do not have sex **for 48 hours** if you:
 - take your pill more than three hours late
 - forget to take one or more pills
 - start a pill pack late
 - are throwing up (vomiting) or have diarrhea
- Emergency contraception (EC) can help prevent pregnancy. If you take a pill late or forget a pill **and** have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, think about getting EC.

What are side effects of POP?

- The most common side effect of POP is a change in your period. It might be early, late, or you might have spotting. Some women do not have periods at all while taking POP.
- Many women have no side effects with POP. There is a chance you might have the following side effects (especially in the first 3 months):
 - acne
 - mood changes
 - upset stomach (nausea)
 - headaches
 - weight gain or loss
 - cysts on your ovaries
 - sore breasts
 - decreased sex drive
 - dizziness
 - feel tired

If you have any of these side effects, **do not stop taking the pill.** Talk to your healthcare provider. Most side effects get better after 3 months.

- POP helps prevent pregnancy. If you do get pregnant, there is a slightly higher chance that pregnancy will be outside the uterus (ectopic pregnancy). If you are pregnant and have been taking POP, tell your healthcare provider.

When should I see my doctor?

- See your doctor **right away** if you have:
 - trouble breathing
 - a very bad cough
 - a very bad rash
 - trouble swallowing
 - pressure or pain in your chest
 - swelling in the face, lips, tongue
 - sudden very bad pain in your lower abdomen

If you cannot see your doctor, go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department.

- See your doctor if you have a lump in your breast or very bad depression.

Important Things to Remember:

- It is safe to take the pill for many years. You don't need to "take a break" from POP.
- You can get pregnant as soon as you stop taking POP.
- Some women should not take POP. Talk with your healthcare provider to see if POP is right for you.
- POP does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STI) or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- You can get pregnant if you don't take the pill properly.
- **Do not** take POP if you are pregnant or think you might be.
- Some medications can affect how the pill works. **Ask your doctor or pharmacist about any medications (prescription or over-the-counter) you are taking.**
- Talk to your healthcare provider about what type of birth control is best for you after having a baby.

Sexual Decision Making

- Choose to have sex or not—you have the right to make that decision.
- Choose to protect yourself from getting pregnant and STIs.
- Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STIs and HIV.
- Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.

For More Information

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Education/Health Promotion 403-955-6515

Clinical Services

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre	5 th floor, 1213–4 th St SW	403-955-6500
South Calgary Health Centre	31 Sunpark Plaza SE	403-943-9510
Sunridge Professional Building	406, 2675–36 th St NE	403-944-7666

Website

www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth

For 24-hour nurse advice and health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in Calgary or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll free.

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