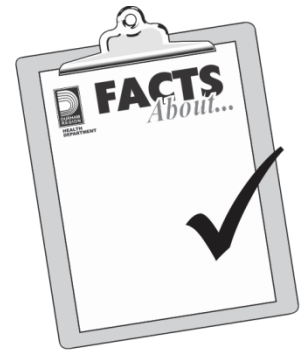




# FACTS *About...*



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## BIRTH CONTROL PILL

### What is it?

The birth control pill (the pill) is made up of one or two hormones, estrogen and/or progestin. The hormones prevent pregnancy by keeping the eggs from leaving the ovaries and thickening the mucous in the vagina to stop the sperm from getting to the eggs. They can also change the lining of the uterus, making it difficult for an egg to attach to the wall of the uterus. The pill is taken each day for 21 to 28 days depending on the packaging. Birth control pill packets usually include four to seven days of hormone-free pills each month.

### How effective is it?

Less than one out of 100 women will get pregnant every year if they **always** take the pill each day as directed. When the pill is **not** taken as directed, nine out of every 100 women are at risk of becoming pregnant.

### What are the side effects of this method?

Irregular bleeding, headache, nausea, bloating, increase in appetite, mood changes, acne, and breast tenderness may be experienced by some women. Most side effects disappear with continued use. You should speak to your health care provider if side effects continue for longer than three months.

### What are the benefits?

Benefits of “the pill” can include: decrease risk of pregnancy, regulating your period with less bleeding and cramping and decreased risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer. Some forms of the pill can decrease acne and decrease the risk of fibroids.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



## What are the limitations?

You must visit a health care provider to get a prescription for the birth control pill. The pill needs to be taken every day at the same time. Missing pills greatly decreases the effectiveness of this method and increases the risk of becoming pregnant.

Women who have high blood pressure should follow up with their health care provider. Birth control pills may increase the risk of stroke, heart attack, or blood clots. Some types of the birth control pills are not recommended for women over the age of 35 years who smoke, have severe migraine headaches with aura, breast cancer, liver tumors or liver disease, and those with high blood pressure, a history of blood clots, stroke or heart disease.

## What are the effects on breastfeeding?

Estrogen may reduce breastmilk supply. It is recommended that mothers use progestin only types of birth control. If you are currently breastfeeding and would like to discuss birth control options, it is important to follow up with your health care provider.

## You should know...

- There are many types of the pill available. If you have side effects that are long lasting, you should talk with your health care provider, as a different type of pill may be better for you.
- Stopping and starting the pill repeatedly (pill breaks) is **not** recommended. This places you at risk for unplanned pregnancy and irregular periods.
- The pill does **not** affect your ability to have children in the future.
- The pill does **not** prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and condoms should always be used during sexual activity.

**Contact your health care provider immediately** if you experience any of the following when taking the birth control pill:

- Sudden and severe chest pain/burning/pressure
- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath
- Sudden and severe abdominal pain
- Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)
- Severe headaches or visual problems

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