



Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Progestin-Only Pill

What is it?

The progestin-only pill is an oral contraceptive that contains the hormone progestin. Unlike most birth control pills, it does not contain the hormone estrogen. Progestin thickens mucus in the cervix preventing sperm from reaching the egg and thins the lining of the uterus making it harder for an egg to attach. It stops the eggs from leaving the ovaries in about half of users. The progestin-only pill must be taken at the same time every day for 28 days with no pill-free period.

How effective is it?

Less than 1 out of 100 women will get pregnant every year if they follow the exact directions every day. When the pill is not taken exactly as directed (missing a pill or taking it late), 5-10 out of every 100 women are at risk of becoming pregnant.

What are the side effects of this method?

The most common side effect is a change in your period. It might be early, late, or you might have spotting. Some women don't have periods at all. Other side effects may include: acne, mild headaches, tender breasts, tiredness, dizziness, slight weight gain or loss, moodiness or depression, decreased sex drive, upset stomach (nausea), and follicular cysts. Most side effects disappear with continued use.

What are the benefits?

Progestin-only pills provide a safe alternative for women who are unable to take estrogen. Benefits can include: effective and reversible birth control, decreased bleeding and cramping, and decreased frequency and severity of migraine headaches. The progestin-only pill can be started by postpartum women any time after childbirth.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

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



What are the limitations?

Progestin-only pills must be taken at the same time every day. If a dose is taken 3 or more hours late, use of a condom for the next 48 hours can lessen the risk of becoming pregnant. If you miss a pill, take it as soon as you remember and use a condom for the next 48 hours. If you become pregnant, there is a chance of an ectopic pregnancy: a pregnancy outside the uterus.

What are the effects on breastfeeding?

The progestin-only pill can be considered safe to use when breastfeeding and should not affect breast milk production.

You should know...

- The intrauterine device or contraceptive implant are progestin-only birth control options that are available if you have problems remembering to take your pill.
- If side effects of the progestin-only pill are long lasting, you may want to ask your health care provider if there is another birth control option that is better for you.
- If you become pregnant or complain of pain in your lower abdomen while on a progestin-only pill, an ectopic pregnancy must be ruled out.
- Stopping and starting the pill is not recommended. This places women at risk of unplanned pregnancy and irregular periods.
- There is no effect on your ability to have children in the future. The chances of pregnancy return to normal quickly after stopping the progestin-only pill.
- The pill does not prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Condoms should always be used during sexual activity.
- If you are taking antibiotics or experience vomiting or diarrhea while using the pill, use a backup method of birth control.

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