

Reading Kills

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The Canadian Organization for Development through Education. Founded in 1959, CODE needs your help to continue to provide literacy projects worldwide.



**Answers to your
contraceptive
health questions**

Q. Allie, I've missed taking a couple of my birth control pills this month. What does this mean and how should I remember to take them?

A. Many women forget to take their birth control pills once in a while. Despite the fact that women sometimes forget, the birth control pill has remained the most popular and widely used method of contraception. But to ensure its 99 per cent efficacy rate, it needs to be taken properly.

Your pill: Make it part of a routine

The birth control pill should be taken at the same time every day to ensure its effectiveness. Try to associate taking your pill with some regular activity such as eating a meal or brushing your teeth. Whether it be in the morning or at night, forming a routine will make remembering to take the pill easier.

Most birth control pills on the market today are available in 21 and 28-day packages. With the 21-day pack, you take a pill each day for 21 days and then nothing for seven days. Following the seven days, a new package is started. Many women prefer the 28-day pack because they find it easier to remember to take a pill every day without the break. The 28-day pack contains the same pills as the 21-day pack plus an additional seven inactive pills used as a "reminder" during the "off-time." These seven pills contain no active ingredients.

When you miss a pill

If you realize that you have forgotten to take a pill, you should take it as soon as you remember, then take your next pill at the usual time and continue on with the rest of the package as normal. This may mean taking two pills in one day. It is unlikely that you'll get pregnant from missing one pill. However, it's wise to use a back-up method of birth control for the rest of the month.

If you miss two pills in a row, take two pills the day you remember. Take two

pills the next day, then take one pill a day for the rest of the package. Don't forget to use a back-up method of birth control.

If you miss three or more pills, use a back-up method of birth control and call your doctor or healthcare professional to find out what to do. Missing pills can sometimes cause some spotting or light bleeding as well as a little nausea.

Medical officials recognize that it is important to use pills containing the lowest-dose of estrogen possible, in part because they are well-tolerated. Recently, a new low-dose birth control pill has become available. Alesse, which comes in 21-day and 28-day packs, is the lowest-dose combination levonorgestrel birth control pill available to Canadian women. While it is low-dose, Alesse is still more than 99 per cent effective at preventing pregnancy.


If you regularly miss taking pills, you should speak with your doctor or nurse. Together, you can discuss other birth control methods. Remember, birth control pills do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Benefits of Taking Oral Contraceptives

- Reduced risk of cancer of ovaries
- Reduced risk of benign breast disease
- Reduced risk of ovarian cysts
- Lighter periods (less blood flow, fewer days)
- Decrease in pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS)
- May limit acne

2:59 AM

You're still unconscious.

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