

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES (BIRTH CONTROL PILLS)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STARTING ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

- ♦ Oral contraceptives are available in 21- or 28-day packs. Active pills (pills with hormones) are taken for 21 days; 28-day pills contain 7 "spacer" pills (contain no hormones).
- ♦ Start pills on first Sunday after period begins (if period begins on Sunday, you should take the first pill on that day).
- ♦ Take one pill a day until pack is finished; if 28-day pack—begin a new pack immediately; if 21-day pack—skip 7 days and then begin a new pack.
- ♦ Take pill at the same time each day; associate with something that is done at the same time of day (going to bed, brushing teeth, etc.)
- ♦ A backup method such as condom or foam should be used during the first cycle.
- ♦ **Antibiotics may decrease the effectiveness** on oral contraceptives; if you are taking antibiotics, you must use a back-up method of contraception.

INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT EARLY SIDE EFFECTS

- ♦ Some side effects are common during the first few cycles of use, but should disappear after that time.
- ♦ Side effect to expect include the following:
 - Breakthrough bleeding and spotting
 - Symptoms associated with early pregnancy, especially nausea
- ♦ Try not to make a decision about discontinuing the pill until after the 3rd cycle so that side effects will have a chance to resolve

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DEALING WITH MISSED PILLS

Get Back On Schedule by Using These Guidelines

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| ♦ If less than 24 hours late in taking pill | Take the missed pill immediately and return to the daily pill-taking routine making sure the next pill is on time. |
| ♦ If 24 hours late in taking pill | Take both the missed pill and today's pill at the same time. |
| ♦ If more than 24 hours late in taking one pill, and is late or completely missed a second or third | Take the last pill that was missed immediately; take the next pill on time; throw out the other missed pill(s), and take the rest of the pills on schedule.
Spotting is very likely to occur. |

IN ALL CASES BACK-UP CONTRACEPTION MUST BE USED FOR AT LEAST 7 DAYS

Uphold, C.R. & Graham, M.V. (1998). *Clinical Guidelines in Family Practice* (3rd ed.). Gainesville, Florida: Barmarrae Books.

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