

Progestin-Only Birth Control Pill

What is the progestin-only pill (POP)?

POP is a type of birth control pill that contains only one hormone called progestin. POP is sometimes called the ‘mini-pill’. There are different types of POP, with different types of progestins.



How well does POP work?

- With **typical use** (not following the exact directions) POP is **91%** effective.
- With **perfect use** (you follow the exact directions all the time) POP is **99.7 %** effective.
- Most pregnancies happen because people forget to take their pills.
- POP doesn’t protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.

How do I start taking POP?

You need a prescription from your health care provider. **Take one pill at the same time every day.** When the pack is done, start a new pack the next day, even if you still have your period or you didn’t get a period.

	Norethindrone POP (e.g., Movisse® and Jencycla®)	Drospirenone POP (e.g., Slynd®)
What it is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hormone in all 28 pills • there are no hormone-free pills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hormone in the first 24 pills • the last 4 pills are hormone-free
Works by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decreasing the amount of cervical mucus and making it thicker which slows the movement of the sperm, making it harder to get to the egg • slowing down the egg in the fallopian tube • sometimes stopping an egg from being released (about half the time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stopping the ovaries from releasing an egg. You can’t get pregnant if you don’t release an egg
When to start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on day 1 to 5 of your period, it works right away • on any other day, you need to use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don’t have vaginal sex for 48 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on day 1 of your period, it works right away • on any other day, you need to use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don’t have vaginal sex for 7 days

What are the benefits of POP?

POP can be used by most people including those who can't use estrogen or:

- are at higher risk of blood clots with other types of birth control pills, such as those over 35 years old who smoke or vape nicotine
- have a history of migraines with aura
- have side effects from other types of birth control
- have recently had a baby or are breast/chest feeding

You can get pregnant as soon as you stop taking POP.

It is safe to take POP for many years. There is no need to “take a break” from it.

How will POP affect my period?

Most people will experience changes to their period. These changes are not harmful and don't affect how well POP works.

- It might be early, late, or you might have spotting or bleeding at unexpected times.
- Some people who take norethindrone POP (e.g., Movisse ® and Jencycla ®) don't have periods when taking POP.
- Most people who take drospirenone POP (e.g., Slynd ®) will have bleeding during the hormone-free pills.

What are the side effects of POP?

There is a chance that POP may cause:

- acne
- mild headaches
- breast/chest tenderness
- dizziness
- upset stomach (nausea)
- mood changes
- tiredness
- extra hair on your face or body
- decreased sex drive
- cysts on the ovaries

If you have any side effects, don't stop taking POP. Talk to your health care provider about your concerns.

If you think you could be pregnant and have been taking POP, talk to your health care provider. There is a higher risk of pregnancy outside of the uterus (ectopic pregnancy).

What if I forget to take a pill?

Taking POP more than 3 hours late is considered a “missed pill”. Missing pills can increase the risk of pregnancy. What to do next depends on what kind of pill you're on, and how long it's been since your last pill.

Missed Pill(s)	Norethindrone POP (e.g., Movisse® and Jencycla®)	Drospirenone POP (e.g., Slynd®)
Forgot 1 pill that is 3 to 24 hours late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take it as soon as you remember, even if that means you take 2 pills in one day • continue to take 1 pill a day until the pack is finished • you're not protected from pregnancy until pills have been taken on schedule for at least 48 hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex for 48 hours • think about getting emergency contraception as soon as possible to help prevent pregnancy if you have vaginal sex without a condom before pills have been taken on schedule for at least 48 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take it as soon as you remember, even if that means you take 2 pills in one day • continue to take 1 pill a day until the pack is finished • you're still protected from pregnancy
Forgot 2 or more pills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take the last missed pill • continue to take 1 pill a day until the pack is finished • you're not protected from pregnancy until pills have been taken on schedule for at least 48 hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex for 48 hours • think about getting emergency contraception as soon as possible to help prevent pregnancy if you have vaginal sex without a condom before pills have been taken on schedule for at least 48 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take the last missed pill • continue to take one pill a day until the pack is finished • skip the hormone-free pills if any of the last 7 days of hormone pills are missed. Start a new pack right away • you're not protected from pregnancy until pills have been taken on schedule for 7 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex for 7 days • think about getting emergency contraception as soon as possible to help prevent pregnancy if you have vaginal sex without a condom either before pills have been taken on schedule for at least 7 days, or if the missed pills happened during days 1-7 of your pack

Vomiting or severe watery diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if vomiting or diarrhea more than 2 hours after taking it, no action is required • if vomiting or diarrhea less than 2 hours after taking it, follow missed pill instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if vomiting or diarrhea more than 4 hours after taking it, no action is required • if vomiting or diarrhea less than 4 hours after taking it, follow missed pill instructions
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If you need more help deciding what to do, talk to your health care provider or go to sexandu.ca, click on contraception and look for *Stay On Schedule*.

Did You Know?

- You have the right to decide to have sex or not. Talk with your partner(s) about consent.
- There’s an 85% chance of becoming pregnant within one year, if no birth control is used for vaginal sex.
- Use a condom every time you have sex (oral, vaginal, anal). Condoms help prevent pregnancy, STIs and HIV.
- You can help prevent HIV by taking a pill every day. Many Albertans can get it for free. Visit www.prepalberta.ca to find out more.
- Transgender and gender diverse people who have a uterus can use hormonal birth control. It can help prevent pregnancy and make periods lighter and less painful.

Websites

- ahs.ca/srh
- ReadyorNotAlberta.ca
- TeachingSexualHealth.ca
- myhealth.alberta.ca
- sexandu.ca

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.



Scan for more information