Your Guide to the Combined Pill

Helping you choose the method of contraception that is best for you

READ FULL LEAFLET DL 20 pages

www.bhps.org.uk/item/fpcp15

SUMMARY

The combined pill is usually just called the pill. It contains two hormones – estrogen and progestogen. These are similar to the natural hormones women produce in their ovaries.

There are a number of different combined pills (see page 8). If you are taking a combined pill called Qlaira, some of the information in this booklet may not apply to you. Seek advice.

How effective is the pill?

How effective any contraceptive is depends on how old you are, how often you have sex and whether you follow the instructions.

If 100 sexually active women don’t use any contraception, 80 to 90 will become pregnant in a year.

If the pill is taken according to instructions it is over 99 per cent effective. This means that less than one woman in 100 will get pregnant in a year.

If the pill is not taken according to instructions, more women will become pregnant.

How does the pill work?

The main way the pill works is to stop the ovaries from releasing an egg each month (ovulation).

It also:

• thickens the mucus from your cervix. This makes it difficult for sperm to move through it and reach an egg
• makes the lining of your uterus (womb) thinner so it is less likely to accept a fertilised egg.

Where can I get the pill?

You can go to a contraception or sexual health clinic, or general practice. If you prefer not to go to your own general practice, or if they don’t provide contraceptive services, they can give you information about another practice or clinic. All treatment is free and confidential. You don’t need to have a vaginal or breast examination or cervical screening test when you are first prescribed the combined pill.

Can anyone use the pill?

Not everyone can use the combined pill so your doctor or nurse will need to ask you about your own and your family’s medical history. Do mention any illness or operations you have had. See the full leaflet for a list of some of the conditions which may mean you should not use the combined pill.

Other Headings in the Leaflet

What are the advantages of the pill?

What are the disadvantages?

Will I put on weight?

Are there any risks?

Are all combined pills the same?

How do I start the first pack of pills?

I’ve just had a baby. Can I use the pill?

Can I use the pill after a miscarriage or abortion?

How do I take the pill?

How important is it that I take the pill at the same time?

Am I protected during the seven day break or the placebo week?

What should I do if I forget to take a pill or start my pack late?

What should I do if I am sick or have diarrhoea?

Will other medicines affect it?

Can I change to a different pill?

I’m bleeding on days when I’m taking the pill, what should I do?

... and more.

For further information see:

www.fpa.org.uk