

## **Instructions For Taking Oral Contraceptives**

You may be instructed to take your pills according to one of the following schedules:

- Start on the first Sunday after your period begins, or
- Start this Sunday if you have had a negative pregnancy test.

Take one pill a day, in order, until you finish the pack. Then begin a new pack the next day without skipping days between packs.

Try to find a time of day that is convenient for you to remember to take your pills the same time, all 7 days of the week. Even though your weekday and weekend schedules are probably different, your pill time should not vary. Set your cell phone or alarm clock if you need a reminder.

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If you miss taking 1 pill, take 2 pills the next day, but don't take them at the same time. Try to take them several hours apart and take them with food.

If you miss 2 pills in a row, take 2 pills for the next 2 days to get caught up.

If you miss more than 2 pills, stop taking the pills and wait to restart a new pack with your next period.

Remember to use another method of birth control in the meantime and for the entire new pack you start.

*Whenever you miss any pills you need to use a back-up method for 2 weeks or for the remainder of that pack.*

### **Back-up Method**

You should use a back-up method of birth control, such as condoms, with your first pack of pills. Keep this back-up method on hand in case you:

- Run out of pills
- Are late taking your pill, or miss a pill
- Need to discontinue your pills for any medical reason
- Want to reduce your risk of sexually transmitted infections
- Are experiencing diarrhea and /or vomiting

### **Common Side Effects**

The first 3-4 months of taking birth control pills is an adjustment period. During this time you may experience bleeding between your periods (breakthrough bleeding), breast tenderness, and/or nausea. These are generally inconvenient problems and are not serious. Take your pills on time and take them with food. If your breasts are uncomfortable, take whatever over-the-counter medication you would usually take to relieve a headache. If you are concerned, don't hesitate to call. 407 898-1500 ext 13 and ask to speak to the nurse.

### **Medication Interactions**

There are some medications that alter the metabolism of birth control pills, making them less effective. The most common are: anticonvulsants, antibiotics, St. John's Wort and some sedatives. You should use a back-up method, like condoms, when taking these medications and for 7 days following their discontinuation. Always tell your health care provider any medications, herbal remedies, and/or over-the-counter products you may be taking.

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### **Medication Interactions (continued)**

If you are having surgery, let your physician know you are taking birth control pills.

Remember: Birth control pills are medication. Let your provider know you are taking them!

### **Pregnancy**

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists has concluded there is no increase in birth defects if you become pregnant while taking birth control pills.

If you decide you want to become pregnant, stop taking the pill at the end of a pack and use another reliable method of birth control for 2-3 consecutive months. This will insure the re-establishment of a normal menstrual pattern, making the date of delivery more accurate to calculate.

### **Important Information**

Birth control pills do not protect you from becoming infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. If you are having intercourse, use a male or female condom every time to reduce your risk of exposure to infections.

It is extremely dangerous to smoke while taking any hormonal method of birth control (Birth control pills, the Patch, the Ring). The risk of heart attack or stroke is greatly increased at any age. Your provider may limit your supply of pills while monitoring your blood pressure and your progress of quitting smoking.

Remember the **Danger Signs** of taking hormonal contraceptives include:

- Leg pain in calf or thigh
- Chest pain, cough, shortness of breath
- Eye problems, vision loss or blurring, speech problems
- Abdominal pain
- Headache, dizziness, weakness, numbness

If you develop any of the above mentioned danger signs you will need to be seen again. Please contact our office immediately to schedule a follow-up visit. If you call our office after hours, please do not hesitate to leave a message for Dr. Barry on extension 15.