



The Mini Pill

Choosing a Method of Contraception

This is one of our series of leaflets that outlines some of the different methods of contraception available and gives you information on the advantages and disadvantages of each. Leaflets in this series include:

The Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill

The Mini Pill

Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices

Emergency Contraception

Implants and Injectable Contraception

We have also produced information leaflets on:

Safe Sex and Sexually Transmitted Infections

Prepregnancy Advice

Our leaflets are designed to give an overview of the various topics. We also stock more detailed information leaflets on a wide range of women's health issues.



Clinics

35 Lower Liffey St
Dublin 1
Tel: 872 8051
872 8095

67 Pembroke Rd
Dublin 4
Tel: 660 9860
668 1108

Northside
Shopping Centre
Coolock
Dublin 5
Tel: 848 4511

www.wellwomancentre.ie

crisispregnancyagency

Formulating & Implementing a National Strategy
Supported by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency



The Mini Pill



What is it?

The progestogen-only pill, often called the "Mini Pill", contains one hormone only: norethisterone – which is a type of progestogen.

How effective is it?

When used very carefully, it is 95 – 99% effective. It is more effective in older women (30+) and women who are breastfeeding, as both are generally less fertile.

How does it work?

It thickens the mucus at the cervix (entrance to the womb), making it hard for the sperm to travel through. It also alters the lining of the womb to prevent implantation of an egg. Very occasionally it can stop ovulation (the release of an egg each month).

Who is it suitable for?

The progestogen-only pill is often recommended for women who want to take a contraceptive pill but should not take oestrogen and therefore cannot take the combined pill. This may be especially useful for smokers over 35, breastfeeding women and women with diabetes or hypertension.

Side effects

Most women will experience some side effects when they start taking the pill. Common side effects include headaches, breast tenderness, mood swings, bloating, nausea and leg cramps. Decreased sex drive and acne can also occur.

If you get any of these side effects, they usually settle within a few weeks.

How do I take it?

Take the first pill on the first day of your period and then one every day until you finish the pack. The following day go directly into another pack – do not take a break.

For the progestogen-only pill to be effective, you must take it at the same time every day. Find a time which suits you and make a habit of taking your pill then. The pill is at its maximum effectiveness a few hours after it is taken, so for many women early in the evening may be a good time.

When is it safe to have sex?

If you take your first pill on the first day of your period, you are protected immediately. If you start later in your cycle you may not be covered for contraception. Consult the instruction leaflet but if you are still unsure, then contact your doctor.

What if I forget to take a pill?

It depends how late you are in taking your pill.

If you are less than three hours late, don't worry. Just take the delayed pill now and further pills as usual.

If you are more than three hours late taking your pill:

- Take the most recently missed pill immediately.
- Leave any earlier missed pills in your pack.
- Take your further pills as usual.
- Use extra precautions (condoms, for instance) for the next two days (48 hours) or seven days for women under 30 years.

- If intercourse has taken place since missing the pill you may wish to take a morning after pill.

Are there any problems?

If you vomit or have diarrhoea, you may not be protected. Continue taking your pills as usual and use another form of contraception until seven days after the vomiting/diarrhoea has stopped. Certain medication interferes with the progestogen-only pills. If you are taking any medication, check with us at the Well Woman Centre, or with your family doctor. Your periods may stop or you may experience irregular bleeding.

What if I miss a period?

With the progestogen – only pill your periods may be irregular, and you may have some bleeding between periods. Make a note of any changes so that you can discuss them with a doctor or nurse. If you have taken all your pills correctly, but you miss a period, it is unlikely that you are pregnant. Continue as normal, but if your period is more than two weeks late, consult us at the Well Woman Centre.

If you have any sudden lower stomach pain as well as a light or delayed period, see your doctor immediately.

Do I need check-ups?

Yes. Your second visit will be about three months after starting the pill, and then every six months after that.