

## Can I re-order my pills on-line?

Yes. If you get your pills from UHCS, you can go to [www.uww.edu/uhcs](http://www.uww.edu/uhcs). Click on 'E-Fill' and follow the prompts. Submit your request at least 2 working days before you come to pick them up.

## Where can I get emergency contraception if I need it?

Emergency contraception is available at the health center on campus. For those 18 yrs. old and older it is also available at many pharmacies by talking with the pharmacist.

## What do I do when I want to stop taking the pills?

Finish a whole pack before you stop. If you do not start another pack, YOU WILL NOT BE PROTECTED FROM GETTING PREGNANT. Your first period off the pill may be on time or it may be several weeks late. If you stop the pills because you want to become pregnant, it is wise to use a different birth control method after going off the pill until your normal periods return. **Use prenatal vitamins for at least 1 month before trying to get pregnant.**

## SMOKING AND HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES:

Do not smoke cigarettes. Birth control pills slightly increase your risk of strokes, blood clots, high blood pressure, heart attacks, gallbladder disease, vision problems, and liver tumors. Cigarette smoking further increases the risk of stroke, blood clots, high blood pressure and heart attacks.

## DANGER SIGNALS: Go to the emergency room IF ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS DEVELOP:

- Severe headaches - new or increased frequency
- Seizure
- Difficulty speaking
- Blurred vision or temporary loss of vision
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe leg or arm pain

Remember that birth control pills do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections.

Information source: Contraceptive Technology, Eighteenth Revised Edition, 2004  
Ardent Media, Inc. New York.

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# PILL POINTERS



[www.uww.edu/uhcs](http://www.uww.edu/uhcs)

## When do I start my pills?

There are three ways to start your pills. Be sure to use a back-up method\* for the first cycle (month) no matter when you start your pills.

1. **Day 1 start:** Take your first pill on the first day of your period.
2. **Sunday start:** Take your first pill on the Sunday after your period begins. If your period starts on Sunday, begin your pill that very day.
3. **Quick start:** If you can not be pregnant and don't need emergency contraception, your provider will discuss starting the pill the day of your visit.

## How do I take my pills?

Begin taking the 21 hormone pills, one a day. Then take the 7 "reminder" pills, one a day. Your period should come some time during the week you are taking the reminder pills, and it may last anywhere from a few hours to all 7 days. Take all 7 of the reminder pills, regardless of when your period starts or how long it lasts. After you have taken the 7 reminder pills, begin a new pack of pills the next day. You will always be starting a new pack of pills on the same day of the week. Every cycle will be 28 days long.

## Do I really have to take the reminder pills?

No. Reminder pills are for women who feel more comfortable taking a pill every day. If you choose not to take the reminder pills, that's OK, just as long as you skip 7 days before starting a new pill pack. The plan is to be 3 weeks on the hormone pills, then 1 week off.

## How many pills do I have to take until I'm safe from getting pregnant?

We recommend that you use a back – up method the first cycle. If you take your pills correctly, you are protected every day of your cycle, even while taking the seven “reminder” pills.

## When during the day should I take my pill?

It doesn't matter what time of day, as long as you take your pills at the same time every day. To help you remember to take your pills try taking them with a regularly scheduled activity like eating a meal or watching the 10 o'clock news. You may want to set your cell phone alarm as a reminder.

## What if I have bleeding or spotting between my periods?

Breakthrough bleeding or spotting is very common the first few months you are on the pill. It can also occur when you don't take your pills at the same time every day. The bleeding may be like a normal period or it may be just brown spotting. **DO NOT STOP YOUR PILLS.** Continue taking them as directed. If the bleeding continues beyond the first 2 or 3 months even though you are taking your pills correctly, or if it becomes heavier than a normal period, call the clinic. You may need a change of pills.

\* Back-up methods include abstinence or condoms and a contraceptive spermicide (available in various forms). Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions for all products.

## What if I miss a period?

As long as you have taken all your pills correctly, your chances of being pregnant are very slight. There is no need to worry or to stop your pills. However, if you have skipped any pills or have been on any new medications during the month and then miss a period, call the clinic for an appointment to discuss having a pregnancy test. If you've taken your pills correctly, but miss 2 periods in a row, or this is your first month on pills, call the clinic as soon as possible for an appointment. Remember...your periods may be much lighter when you are taking the pill, maybe even only a few hours.

## Is it all right to take other medications while I'm taking the pill?

There are some drugs (certain antibiotics and seizure medications) that may decrease the effectiveness of birth control pills. If you are prescribed another medication, ask your practitioner or pharmacist if it will interfere with the birth control pill you are taking. If there is any doubt, it is always safest to use a backup method for that cycle. Some over the counter medications, such as St. John's Wort and antacids may also decrease the effectiveness of the pill. Ask your practitioner or pharmacist if there are any potential drug interactions before using these products.

## What if I run out of pills?

Try not to! Always know how many packs of pills you have on hand. When you start your last pack, make arrangements to come to the clinic or pharmacy.

## What if I forget to take a pill?

Missing a pill means taking it after an interval of more than 24 hours or completely missing a pill. The impact of a missed pill depends upon which week in the pill packet you miss a pill and whether you need to use emergency contraception. IF you only had **one episode of missed pills** in this packet follow these directions:

If you **miss one or two** pills and it is during the **FIRST** week of your pill pack:

1. **Take 2 pills as soon as possible** then continue to take the remainder of the pills **OR**
2. **IF you have had intercourse within the past 5 days take emergency contraception as soon as possible** (if you take emergency contraception you do not need to double up on your pills). Take the remainder of the pills in your pill pack.
3. **Use a back-up method** for the remainder of this cycle

If you **miss one or two** pills and it is during the **SECOND or THIRD** week of the pill pack:

1. **Take 2 pills as soon as possible** then continue to take the remainder of the pills
2. **Use a back-up method** for the remainder of this cycle

If you have **missed three or more pills** or **missed pills more than once** in this pill pack **call the triage nurse at 262 472 1300 x 2211 to discuss what you should do.**

## What if I have vomiting or diarrhea?

Vomiting or diarrhea can decrease the absorption of the hormones in pills. The longer you have vomiting or diarrhea, the more important it would be to avoid intercourse, use a back-up method, and/ or use emergency contraception.