

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**factoid** Condom use among UA students who are sexually active is at an all-time high. It has increased 30% since 1998. (Health and Wellness Surveys, 1998-2007)

## Q. What are some of the benefits and side-effects of the birth control pill?

A. Since it was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1960, “the pill” remains one of the safest and most effective forms of birth control available. In fact, oral contraceptives (OCs) may very well be the most studied medication ever produced, leaving no doubt that they offer overwhelmingly more health benefits than risks.

Today, there are more than 40 types of OCs available, all of which contain estrogen, progestin or some combination of the two. In general, the pill is considered very safe for most women in good health, but like any drug, it does have side effects and associated risks. Consider the following benefits and risks of OCs with your health care provider before deciding if they are a good option for you.

### Benefits:

- Highly effective in preventing pregnancy
- Decreases menstrual bleeding and cramping
- Lessens premenstrual symptoms
- Makes periods more regular
- May prevent ovarian and uterine cancer
- Improves bone density
- Lowers the risk of ovarian cysts
- May improve acne

### Risks:

- No protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Small risk of heart attack and stroke, which increases among smokers
- Can cause blood clots in rare cases
- Can worsen severe diabetes
- Taking other medications can reduce the effectiveness of the pill

A wide range of contraceptives are available at the Campus Health Service, including the pill. To make an appointment to see a health care provider, call 621-9202 or simply stop by the Highland Commons Building between the 6th St. Garage and Highland Ave.

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