

Transfer Patients with Existing Prescriptions:

There are several ways to get BCP's from Campus Health:

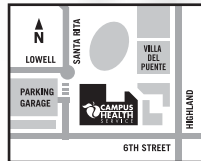
1. Your current health care provider can call in your birth control pill prescription to the Campus Health Pharmacy at 520-621-6516.
 2. You can make an appointment with Women's Health for an annual exam and evaluation. After the appointment, the provider can write you a prescription.
 3. You can make an appointment with Women's Health for a consultation (no exam) and take the following items with you:
 - Copy of last pap smear result (within the last 11 months)
 - Copy of last gynecology exam (this provides important information about your current BCP)
 - Records can be faxed to: 520-626-4301
 - Records can be mailed to:
The University of Arizona Campus Health Service
Attention: Medical Records
1224 East Lowell St. Bldg. #95
Tucson, AZ 85721-0095
- Before scheduling, call Medical Records at 520-621-4068 to verify your record is there.**

Important Phone Numbers:

Lab Results and Medication Refills: 520-621-4470
Appointments: 520-621-9202
Pharmacy: 520-621-6516
Medical Records: 520-621-4068

Hours of Operation:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday **8am-4:30pm**
Wednesday **9am-4:30pm**
Closed on University holidays



CAMPUS HEALTH
www.health.arizona.edu

The University of Arizona, Highland Commons
1224 E. Lowell St., Tucson, AZ 85721
(NW corner of Highland & 6th St)

SPRING 2017

The Combination Oral Contraceptive Pill



CAMPUS HEALTH

What Are They?

Combined oral contraceptive pills or birth control pills (BCP's) contain two hormones, estrogen and progestin. They prevent pregnancy by stopping ovulation (release of eggs), thickening cervical mucus, and making the lining of the uterus thin. Among typical users who start BCP's for the first time, about 5% will experience an accidental pregnancy in the first year. Often, this occurs because BCP's are not taken correctly. If BCP's are used consistently and correctly, one in 1,000 (0.1%) women will become pregnant.

Where Can I Get Birth Control Pills (BCP's)?

You may see a provider (M.D. or N.P.) by making an appointment with Women's Health at the Campus Health Service (520-621-9202). After the evaluation is complete, your provider may prescribe BCP's for you based upon your needs and health. The type of pill prescribed will be based on your discussion and is influenced by your health and personal preferences.

Advantages of Taking BCP's

- BCP's decrease a woman's risk for cancers of the ovaries and the uterine lining. Taking them also lowers your chances of having ovarian cysts.
- BCP's usually decrease women's menstrual cramps.
- They reduce menstrual blood loss and risk of anemia. Periods may become very short and light with minimal or no bleeding at all. Most women like this when they understand it is normal.
- Acne often improves.
- Many women enjoy sex more when on BCP's because they

know they are less likely to get pregnant.

- The cost of BCP's at the Campus Health Service Pharmacy may vary. Consult the pharmacy for the current fee (621-6516).

Disadvantages of Taking BCP's

- BCP's do not protect you from HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STI's) like HPV.
- You must remember to take BCP's every day to ensure effectiveness.
- You may experience nausea and spotting/light bleeding during the 1-3 months of BCP's.
- BCP's may cause headaches, depression or decreased enjoyment of sex in some women.

Before You Start Taking BCP's

1. The right way to take BCP's is to take one pill every day at approximately the same time or within a few hours of your usual time. If you miss pills or start the pack late, you could get pregnant. The more pills you miss, the more likely you are to get pregnant.
2. Some women experience spotting/light bleeding and nausea during the first 1-3 pill packs. If you do have nausea or bleeding, do not stop taking BCP's. Taking your pill with food or a snack may help. The problems will usually decrease or go away. If symptoms persist or are severe, consult your provider.
3. If you have vomiting or diarrhea, for any reason, your BCP's may be less effective.
4. Missing BCP's can cause some spotting or light bleeding, even when you make up the missed BCP's. On days that you take two BCP's to make up for the BCP that you missed the day before, you may feel a bit nauseated.
5. Choose a backup method of birth control (such as condoms and spermicide) to keep available. Use this method if:
 - You forget to take your BCP's one or more days in a row (see section "What if I missed taking some pills. What do I do?").
 - You have a serious "danger sign" (described later in this information sheet) and stop taking your pills.
 - You want to reduce your risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
 - You run out of BCP's.
6. Have Emergency Contraception available.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it normal for my breasts to be sore?

Some women will notice an increase (or decrease) in breast tenderness. Often this will disappear or improve over the first few months. If it is severe, discuss this with your provider at the three-month follow up visit.

Does the pill cause mood changes?

Most women do not notice mood changes when taking oral contraceptives. Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) symptoms tend to improve on BCP's. However, some women may experience depression, irritability, or increased PMS when starting oral contraceptives. If the symptoms are severe or persistent, contact your provider.

I don't want to gain weight. Does the pill cause weight gain?

Most women do not notice weight changes on BCP's.

Will I be able to get pregnant after I stop taking the pill?

- Some women are able to conceive immediately after discontinuing BCP's while other women may experience a delay of 2-3 months. After 2 months, fertility rates are the same whether you are a previous user of BCP's or never used them.
- BCP's are a good option for women who want to become pregnant in the future. By preventing causes of infertility such as ectopic pregnancies, ovarian cysts, endometrial cancer and possible endometriosis, BCP's may actually improve your future ability to become pregnant.
- If your periods are irregular prior to taking BCP's, they may again become irregular after stopping BCP's.
- Return of fertility is not improved by periodically "taking a break" from BCP's; taking a break is not medically helpful in any way.

What if I am a smoker and on BCP's?

Any woman who smokes fifteen or more cigarettes per day, whether they take BCP's or not, runs a higher risk of heart and circulatory problems. In women over age thirty-five, we advise they stop smoking immediately to avoid dangerous risks to all concerned. When you are thinking of quitting, call and schedule an appointment with Health Promotion at 621-6483 or call the Arizona Smoker's Helpline at 1-800-556-6222.

What warning signs or problems should I know about?

Serious complications such as blood clots may occur, but are very rare. Call Women's Health at 626-5738 or

an emergency room if you have any of the following "aches":

- A** Abdominal pain (severe)
- C** Chest pain (severe), shortness of breath or cough
- H** Headache (severe) not relieved by pain medication, or dizziness or numbness
- E** Eye problems (loss or blurring of vision), or speech problems
- S** Severe leg pain, usually only in one leg (calf or thigh)

Why do I feel so nauseated?

Nausea is much less common with low dose birth control pills. However, some women have nausea the first month or two they take BCP's. This tends to go away in the next cycle. To relieve nausea, try taking your pills in the evening or with food. If nausea continues for more than two cycles or is severe, see your provider.

Does the pill cause breast cancer?

Data on breast cancer risk is conflicting, but most studies do not show increased breast cancer risks with BCP use.

I missed taking some pills. What do I do?

- One pill missed: Take the missed pill as soon as you can and continue taking your hormonal contraception daily. No emergency contraception needed. Use a backup method such as a condom for the next 7 days.
- Two or more pills missed: Take one of the missed pills and today's pill, and finish your pack on the regular schedule. Emergency Contraception is recommended. You must also use a back up method such as a condom and spermicide or abstinence for the next seven days
- One or more placebo pills missed (no active pills missed): Ignore the missed pills and continue with your current pill pack on schedule.

What if I have sex and haven't been using any birth control or a condom breaks or slips?

You can take emergency contraceptive pills (often called "the morning after pill" or Plan B) within 72 hours of unprotected sex, but recent studies indicate that emergency contraception may be more effective if taken within the first 24 hours of unprotected sex. This reduces your chance of becoming pregnant. The effectiveness in preventing pregnancy is up to 75%. Regular BCP's are much more effective (98-99) than emergency contraception. Keep an extra packet of emergency contraception with you for an emergency. It is now an "over the counter" medication and is available at most pharmacies. Ella is another emergency

contraceptive pill. Ella is available by prescription only.

It may be taken up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse, but is most effective when taken as soon as possible. For other questions related to possible birth control failure, call the Women's Health Clinic nurse at 626-5738. If you need help after hours, call 570-7898.

Can I extend my active pill cycle to skip or delay periods?

Yes. Most birth control pills are packaged with 21 days of active pills with hormones, followed by 7 days of inactive pills without hormones. During the inactive pills, women usually bleed like a normal menstrual period. Women can safely take oral contraceptives for longer than 3 weeks at a time. You may do this by skipping the inactive pills and going directly to the next packet of active pills. This can be done in a variety of regimes-from extending active pills for an extra week to avoid a period on vacation or during finals (it doesn't always work and some women will still bleed), to continuing active pills for several months to avoid periods for extended periods of time.

1. The most common regimen is to take 8-12 weeks of active pills without interruption, and skipping inactive pills during this time frame, followed by 3 to 7 pill free days when you will have a period. Then restart active pills.
2. You may also continue active pills until bleeding occurs. Then discontinue them for 3-7 days, provided you have already taken at least 21 continuous days of active pills. Then, restart active pills until bleeding returns. Then, repeat the process.
3. A third regimen is to take active pills continuously with no pill free breaks. Ignore any breakthrough bleeding that occurs.

Women using extended pill regimens are more likely to have irregular, unexpected menstrual bleeding, although this effect decreases over time. These methods are more successful with monophasic pills. Monophasic pills are pills with the same hormone dosage. Pills that have changing levels of hormones are more likely to cause break-through bleeding. If break-through bleeding occurs, you may keep taking the pills as directed and ignore the bleeding, or you may stop the pill for 5 days and then restart the pill. If bleeding is persistent and bothersome, make an appointment with your medical provider. If you have more questions about extended cycles, please make an appointment with your provider.



Starting BCP's

1. Read the package insert that comes with your pills.
2. Decide what time of day you want to take your pill. It is important to take it about the same time each day since this will increase its effectiveness.
 - Take one pill each day until you finish the pack, then immediately begin a new pack. Do not skip days between packs.
 - Associate taking your pill with something that you do at about the same time each day, such as going to bed, eating a meal, or brushing your teeth.
 - Mark your calendar to remind yourself of the days you will begin a new pack of BCP's. Some women mark their calendar each day as they take their pill. If you miss pills, you could get pregnant.
 - Check your pill pack each day to make sure you took your pill the day before.
3. You may start taking your BCP's according to one of several different schedules. You can:
 - Start on the first day of menstrual bleeding, OR
 - Start on the first Sunday after your menstrual bleeding begins (which helps to avoid having your period on a weekend). In this instance, use condoms and foam or abstinence for 1week after you begin
 - Start today if you are sure you are not pregnant and have not had unprotected sex since your last period (in this instance, use condoms and foam or abstinence for one week).