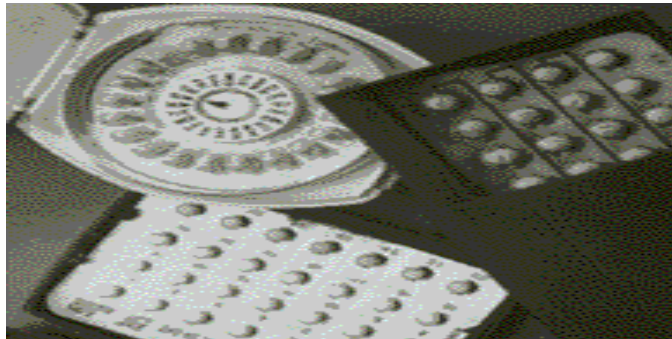




General Authority for Health Services for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi  
Al Rahba Hospital  
**Birth Control Pills (Questions & Answers)**



**What are birth control pills?**

Birth control pills are prescription medications containing hormones that prevent pregnancy. The birth control pill or “the pill” is extremely popular choice of contraceptive because it is easy and efficient.

**Are all forms of the pill the same?**

Pills come in two main types: the combination pills and the mini –pills.

**The combination pills:** are tiny pills taken daily and made up of synthetic estrogen and progesterone. They work by suppressing the ovulation (release of the egg) and recommended for persons below 35 years who do not smoke and have no high blood pressure. It can be given in age above 35 unless they smoke.

**The mini-pill:** is progesterone only pill which is recommended mainly for breast feeding mothers. It causes thickening of the cervical mucus and prevents sperm meeting an egg. It is important that the pill is taken at the same time every day.

**How effective is the pill?**

Properly taken, the combination pill can be as much as 99 % effective .Perfect use means to take the pill every day at the same time. Mini-pill can be effective as 90-93%.

However the effectiveness can be affected due to certain factors:

- Interactions between the pill and some medications:
  - Taking some antibiotics (see the list)
  - Taking certain medications for epilepsy and medications for HIV infection.
- Lack of motivation and not following the instructions.
- Diarrhea and vomiting.

**How do I take the pill?**

**Combination pills:**

The combination pills come in packs of 21 or 28.

- **The 21 packs:** take one hormone pill at the same time each day for 21 days, and then nothing for the next seven days. During that week you will usually get your period.
- **The 28 packs:** take one hormone pill at the same time each day for 28 days. The last 7 pills of the pack are dummy pill (to keep you in the habit).

*Some brands require you to take the pills in a particular order, because they give you varying amounts of the hormones at different times during your cycle.*

### **Progestin only pills (Mini-pills):**

The mini-pills come in packs of 35 and all the tablets contain the hormone, so it's important not to miss any one. These must be taken at the same time each day.

You should use an additional contraceptive method if you vomit or have diarrhea during a cycle. Some antibiotics and other drugs can also affect the way birth control pills work, so be sure to tell your doctor that you are on oral contraceptives before you start taking any other medications.

### **When should I start to take the pill?**

✓ Start the pills on the first day of the menstrual bleeding.

**Or**

✓ Start taking the pills immediately if you are definitely not pregnant.

### **What if I forget to take a pill?**

- If it has been less than 24 hours since the last pill was taken, take a pill right away and then returns to normal pill-taking routine.
- If it has been 24 hours since the last pill was taken, take both the missed pill and the next scheduled pill at the same time.
- If it has been more than 24 hours since the last pill was taken (two or more missed pills), take the last pill that was missed, throw out the other missed pills and take the next pill on time. Additional contraception is used for the remainder of the cycle.

*You should use an additional contraceptive method for 7 days if you are more than 12 hours late in taking an oral contraceptive pill.*

### **Is it safe to breastfeed my baby if I'm on the pill?**

It depends what kind of pill you are taking. Studies have found that the combination pills may affect the quantity and quality of breast milk in some women but the progestin-only pill is safe for nursing moms and it has no effect on breast milk production or quality.

### **Are there any side effects?**

You may have spotting or bleeding between periods, or no period at all. Some women get headaches and nausea (try taking your pills with meals or just before bedtime). Others report swollen breasts, increased appetite, weight gain or loss, an altered sex drive, or periods of depression. Most side effects go away within three months, sometimes switching to another brand of pill can help.

### **Can everybody use the pill?**

For certain category of people, pills are not recommended:

- Women who smoke and aged over 35 years.
- Women with high blood pressure, ischemic heart disease, liver disease, blood clotting, migraine and breast cancer.

### **What are the health risks for me?**

Few may develop high blood pressure and yet another very few may develop alteration in the blood clotting mechanism. The risk is more with women who smoke and are over 35 years old.

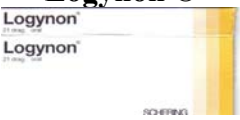



**Are there any benefits on taking the pill?**

Apart from contraception there are few benefits, it suppresses functional cysts in the ovaries and lessens the incidence of carcinoma of ovary. It regulates periods, give relief for heavy periods and dysmenorrheal. Women on pill have less incidence of vaginal infection and reduced incidence benign breast cysts. There are no increases in the incidence of breast cancer in pill users. If there is a strong family history of breast cancer, some physicians are not recommending these drugs.

**Should I have any check up while on pill?**

Regular check ups are recommended, first to prior starting on the pill make sure that your blood pressure is checked, and has a Pap smear done by your doctor. Three months after starting the pill have your BP checked. Once it is ok you should have a yearly check up with your doctor.

**Products available in Al Rahba Hospital**

<b>PRODUCT</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>ESTROGEN</b>	<b>PROGESTIN</b>
<b>Logynon®</b> 	<b>Combined pill</b>	<b>Ethinyl Estradiol</b>	<b>Levonorgestrel</b>
<b>Marvelon®</b> 	<b>Combined pill</b>	<b>Ethinyl Estradiol</b>	<b>Desogestrel</b>
<b>Yasmin®</b> 	<b>Combined pill</b>	<b>Ethinyl Estradiol</b>	<b>Drospirenon</b>
<b>Microval®</b> 	<b>Mini-pill</b>	<b>xxx</b>	<b>Levonorgestrel</b>

**Some Drugs that Decrease the Effectiveness of Oral Contraceptives**

**Amoxicillin- Ampicillin- Carbamazepine- Metronidazole- Phenobarbital-  
Phenytoin- Rifampicin- Tetracycline**

*Prepared & Approved by: Patient & Family Education Committee  
Reference available upon request*

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