

Progesterone-Only Oral Contraceptives (Minipills)

What are minipills?

Minipills are progesterone-only birth control pills (i.e. they contain no estrogen). The progesterone affects the mucus around the cervix and makes it harder for sperm to enter the uterus. It also affects the transport of the egg through the fallopian tubes to prevent fertilization, and can inhibit ovulation in some people. Minipills are more than 95% effective, slightly less than regular birth control pills. As with all hormonal-based contraceptives, minipills do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Why use minipills?

Because minipills have no estrogen, they are an alternative method for women who experience significant side-effects with regular birth control pills and/or have medical conditions that prevent them from using pills containing estrogen.

Advantages

- Easy to use
- Do not harm future fertility
- Do not interrupt sex play
- Avoid typical side effects of birth control pills with estrogen
- Safe for breast-feeding mothers

Disadvantages

- Must be taken every day at the same time.
- Do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Less effective when taken with some drugs. (Be sure to discuss any medications with a clinician.)
- May cause irregular bleeding.

Are there side-effects?

The most common side-effect for women using minipills is irregular bleeding. While many women on minipills have normal periods, others have irregular periods, spotting between periods, or no period at all.

Instructions for using minipills

Mini-Pills come in packs of 28, and one is taken every day. Unlike other birth control pills, *there are no placebo pills in the mini-pill packs.*

STARTING MINIPILLS

Take the first pill on the first day of your period. Continue to take one pill daily, *at the same time of the day, even during your period.*

AFTER THE FIRST PACK

As soon as you finish one pack, begin the next one. Start your next pack even if you are still bleeding or have not started your period. Continue taking one pill every day. Some users may ovulate every month. For others, ovulation may vary from month to month. Some women may never ovulate and go months without any bleeding.

Unlike other birth control pills, there is a greater chance of unplanned pregnancy

if a minipill is forgotten (not taken) or is taken late. You can improve the effectiveness of the minipill by using a backup method, like condoms or spermicide. This is most important during the first three months and during days 8-18 of your menstrual cycle.

Warning Signs

If you experience any of the following, call Gannett for consultation:

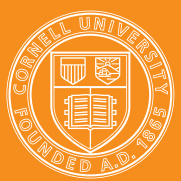
- Abdominal pain: may be due to an ovarian cyst or an ectopic pregnancy. (Don't stop pills, but contact us right away.)
- Repeated, very severe headaches.
- Severe leg or arm pain or numbness.
- Pill taken too late: even if only 3 hours late, use a back-up contraceptive for the next 2 days.
- If your menstrual bleeding pattern concerns you, call Gannett for an appointment to discuss with a clinician.
- If while on the minipill you do not menstruate for 60 days, call Gannett to arrange for a pregnancy test but continue taking your pills.

Late or missed minipills

IF YOU MISS 1 MINIPILL (e.g. yesterday's minipill), take it as soon as you remember. Also take today's minipill at the regular time, even if that means taking two pills in 1 day. If you are more than 3 hours late taking a minipill, use your back-up method of birth control for the next 2 days (48 hours).

IF YOU MISS 2 OR MORE PILLS IN A ROW, your pregnancy protection is decreased. Immediately start using your back-up method. Restart your minipills right away, and take 2 pills a day for 2 days. If your menstrual period does not begin within 4 to 6 weeks, see your clinician for an exam and pregnancy test.

If you have already had intercourse without adequate protection because you missed pills, you may be able to use Emergency Contraception (EC) to prevent



pregnancy. Call Gannett to discuss your options with a clinician.

When to use back-up protection

- *During the first cycle of taking minipills*, you may forget pills or take them late, so a back-up method may make you feel more confident.
- *If late periods make you feel anxious*, a back-up method may help you feel more secure.
- *If you are several hours late taking a minipill*, use a back-up contraceptive for 48 hours until you are back on schedule. If you are concerned about pregnancy, consider Emergency Contraception (EC).
- *To protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)*, use condoms or other latex barriers consistently, even while using the minipills.

Picking up your pills

Your pill prescription can be filled at the Gannett Pharmacy (Monday–Saturday during business hours). It is necessary to have a health check by a nurse after three months on the pill. No appointment is needed for pill pick-up or other nurse consultations.

If you are already using minipills

If you are currently using minipills and want to have your prescription renewals managed at Gannett, please make an appointment with a clinician before you run out of pills. We encourage sexually active women to consider having an annual pap smear screening, STI testing, and a physical examination, and would be happy to provide that service should you wish to make an appointment. However, you may choose to refill your minipills without having the annual gynecological examination.

Please talk with us if you have any questions about the pill, the gynecological exam, or any other sexual health issue. Most nurse visits and appointments with a Clinical Counselor are free and confidential. Appointments can be made at 255-5155. We also offer phone consultation 24/7 at 255-5155.

Fall and Spring Semester Hours:

Monday-Friday	8:30 am-5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am-4:00pm
Sunday	building closed

Check the web for hours during breaks, winter and summer sessions: www.gannett.cornell.edu

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