

## What Is It?

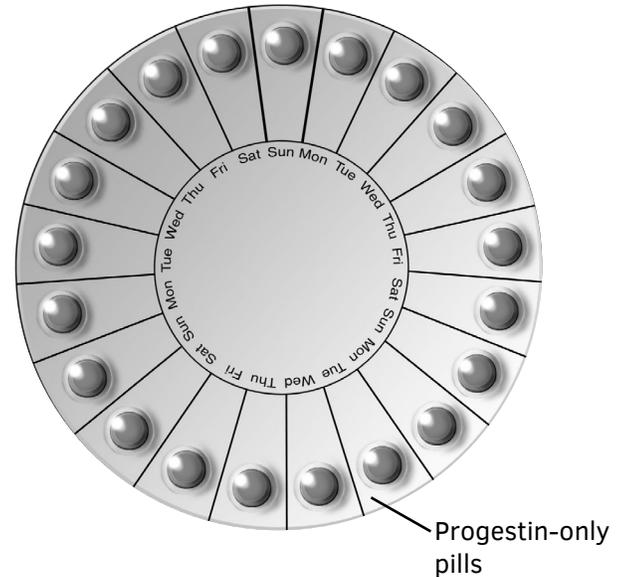
Progestin-only birth control pills contain the hormone progestin.

## How Does It Work?

The progestin-only pill thickens cervical mucus, which makes it harder for sperm to reach the egg, and thins the lining of the uterus. The progestin-only pill also stops the ovaries from releasing an egg each month, but it does not do so consistently.

## How Do I Use It?

You take a progestin-only pill at the same time each day for 28 days. If a pill is missed by more than 3 hours, take another pill as soon as possible and use a back-up birth control method, such as a condom, for the next 2 days. If vomiting or severe diarrhea occurs within 3 hours of taking a pill, use a back-up method for 2 days.



## Benefits

- They do not interfere with sex.
- They can be taken if you have certain health conditions that prevent you from taking combined hormonal pills, such as a history of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or high blood pressure.
- If you wish to get pregnant, simply stop taking the pills.
- They can be started immediately after an abortion, a miscarriage, or childbirth and while breastfeeding.
- They may reduce menstrual bleeding or stop bleeding completely.

## Risks

- They should not be used by women with breast cancer or a history of breast cancer. They are not recommended for women with certain medical conditions, such as some liver disease and certain forms of lupus.
- Unintended pregnancy can occur if you do not take the pill at the same time each day.

## Possible Side Effects

- Irregular bleeding, including short cycles, spotting, heavy bleeding, or no bleeding at all
- Headaches
- Breast tenderness
- Nausea

<b>Effectiveness of progestin-only pills compared to other methods</b>	Highly effective  ← Progestin-only pills
	Less effective
<b>Protects against STIs, including HIV?</b>	No
<b>Effective right away?</b>	Yes, if you start taking the pills within 5 days of the start of your menstrual period. If you start taking the pills at any other time, avoid sexual intercourse or use a back-up method, such as a condom, for the next 2 days.
<b>OK with breastfeeding?</b>	Yes

\*Abbreviations: HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; STIs, sexually transmitted infections.

Copyright November 2021 by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be posted on a website, loaded into an electronic medical record (EMR) system, or republished in any form.

This is FF582 in ACOG's Patient Education Fast Facts Series.

This information is designed as an educational aid for the public. It offers current information and opinions related to women's health. It is not intended as a statement of the standard of care. It does not explain all of the proper treatments or methods of care. It is not a substitute for the advice of a physician. For ACOG's complete disclaimer, visit [www.acog.org/WomensHealth-Disclaimer](http://www.acog.org/WomensHealth-Disclaimer).