

# ABOUT YOUR BIRTH CONTROL PILL

The name of your birth control pill is\_\_\_\_\_.  
(Memorize this name in case of emergencies!)

Birth control pills have been around for a long time; your mother may have taken them. Today's pills are much safer than older birth control pills. They are not as strong. This means that they have fewer side effects, not that they don't work as well.

Serious side effects of the birth control pill are more common in women older than 35 years of age and in women who smoke. Side effects include

- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Blood clots in the legs

If you EVER experience

- Sudden chest pain
- Severe headache
- Swelling and pain in the leg

call your health care provider right away. Medical conditions such as liver disease, diabetes, or lupus also should be discussed with your health care provider before taking birth control pills.

Besides being a very effective means of birth control, the pills may

- Cause your periods to be lighter and shorter
- Lessen cramps
- Improve acne
- Lower your risk of getting certain cancers

## How To Take Your Birth Control Pill

- Start on Sunday; this way your period will not come on weekends.
- Take the first pill the Sunday after your period starts; if your period starts on a Sunday, take the pill that day.
- Take the pill at the same time each night (for example, at night when you brush your teeth).
- The hormones that make the pills work are in only the first three weeks' worth of pills. The final week does not contain any hormones; these are just to remind you to take a pill every day.
- About 1 in 10 women have some spotting, or light bleeding, while taking their first pack of pills. This is normal; continue to take all of the pills in order.

- If you forget a pill, take it the next day. If you miss 2, take 3 the next day. If you miss 3 or more, throw the package away and use an alternative means of birth control, such as condoms. Your period should start shortly. You can restart a new pack of pills the next Sunday.
- Birth control pills do NOT protect you against STDs; ALWAYS use a condom.

If you have any problems with these pills, please contact your health care provider. Many kinds of pills are available; another type of pill may work better for you.

**REMEMBER:** Birth control pills only work if you take them!