Vomiting and Diarrhea
If you have diarrhea and/or vomiting, continue to take your birth control pills. Abstain or use a back-up method of birth control (such as condoms) until 7 days after the vomiting and/or diarrhea have stopped.

Other Medication Use While on the Pill
- Rifampin (a treatment for tuberculosis), certain seizure medications, prolonged use of oral anti-fungals, and St. John’s Wart can reduce the birth control pills effectiveness.
- Conflicting advice exists regarding the impact of antibiotics on birth control pill effectiveness. A condom as a back-up method is always an option for women who feel less protected during such times.

Other Pill Pointers
1. When you see a clinician for any reason be sure to mention you are on birth control pills. This is particularly important if you are admitted to the hospital or if you plan to have surgery.
2. Read the package insert that comes with your pills.
3. Smoking while using birth control pills increases your risk of heart attack, stroke, and blood clots, especially if you are over age 35. It is recommended that you stop smoking if you are taking the pill.
4. It is important to plan ahead to make sure you always have an adequate supply of birth control pills.
5. Condoms are an effective back-up method if you run out or miss pills and also for prevention of sexually transmitted diseases/HIV.

For Refills or Emergency Contraception:
- If you are a new birth control pill user, a “3-month” follow-up visit with a nurse is recommended to check your blood pressure and assess for any other problems.
- Access eFill, a web-based prescription refill service, available on the Student Health Service website at www.uwec.edu/SHS.
- For emergency contraception, call Student Health Service at 715-836-5360.

For More Information:
- Read the package insert that comes with your pills.
- Visit the website of your pill’s manufacturer.
- Call Student Health Service at 715-836-4311.

Student Health Service is located on upper campus in the Crest Wellness Center.

Hours*:
M/T/Th/F 7:45 am - 4:30 pm
W 10:00 am - 4:30 pm
*When classes are in session.

For Appointment 715-836-5360
Information 715-836-4311
Fax 715-836-5979

www.uwec.edu/SHS
What to Do During the Month

- Pills are most effective if taken at the same time every day in order to keep a steady level of hormone in your system. If pills are taken at varied times of the day, bleeding or spotting between periods is possible.
- Always follow the package sequence exactly, even if you have some bleeding between periods or don’t have sex often.
- You can expect your period each month sometime during the time you are taking your “inactive” pills. You are protected from pregnancy during the 7 “inactive” pills as long as you took the 3rd week of pills correctly and start the next pack of pills on time.

Pills and Your Period

- Women taking birth control pills get withdrawal bleeding or breakthrough bleeding, they do not get periods. A period is the bleeding that women get 2 weeks after ovulation. Women who take birth control pills consistently do not ovulate, therefore they do not get periods. Many people call the bleeding while on birth control pills a period but that is not an accurate description.
- Breakthrough Bleeding (BTB) occurs while you are taking the hormone pills. This is a common side effect when starting birth control pills or if you miss some pills. The bleeding can be spotting or like a normal “period”. If you experience BTB, continue to take the pills as directed. BTB that occurs after the first 3 cycles of pill use may be normal but could be a sign of a more serious problem. Call the clinic if you have concerns about your bleeding pattern.
- Withdrawal bleeding occurs when you stop taking the hormone pills or during your time on the inactive pills or “placebo pills”. Sometimes this bleeding continues into your next pack of pills.
- Women on birth control pills do not need to have withdrawal bleeds. There are many new ways of taking birth control pills that alter bleeding patterns or eliminate withdrawal bleeding.

Missed Pills

- If you miss hormone-containing pills you could become pregnant. The worst pills to miss are in the beginning of the first week and at the end of the third week.
- Missed pills can cause breakthrough bleeding, even if you make up the missed pills. Taking more than one birth control pill at a time can cause nausea.
- You do not need to make up any missed inactive pills. If you take your pills consistently, you are “protected” from pregnancy during the time you are taking the inactive pills.
- Remember the seven-day rule: Once you have been on the hormone pills for seven days ovulation is prevented. Once you have been off the hormone pills (active pills) for more than seven days your body may be ready to ovulate and a backup method is needed to prevent pregnancy.
- If you miss 1 hormonal pill (by 24-48 hrs) or if you are simply late taking 1 pill (for less than 24 hrs), you should:
  - Take the late or missed pill as soon as possible.
  - Continue taking the remaining pills at the usual time (even if it means taking two pills on the same day).
  - No additional contraceptive protection needed.
  - Emergency contraception is not usually needed but can be considered if hormonal pills were missed earlier in the cycle or in the last week of the previous cycle.
- If you miss 2 or more consecutive hormonal pills (more than 48 hrs have passed since you took a pill), you should:
  - Take the most recent missed pill as soon as possible (discarding any other missed pills).
  - Continue taking your pills on schedule (even if it means taking two pills on the same day).
  - Use back-up contraception (e.g. condoms) or avoid sexual intercourse until you have taken the hormonal pills for 7 consecutive days.
  - If the pills you missed were in the last week of hormonal pills (e.g., days 15-21 for 28-day pill packs):
    - Omit the hormone-free interval by finishing the hormone pills in the current pack and starting a new pack the next day.
    - If you are unable to start a new pack immediately, use back-up contraception or avoid sexual intercourse until hormonal pills from a new pack have been taken for 7 consecutive days.
  - Emergency contraception should be considered if hormonal pills were missed during the first week and unprotected sexual intercourse occurred in the previous 5 days. It may also be considered at other times if appropriate.

Minor Side Effects

These side effects may or may not occur and will usually disappear by the end of the first few pill packs. On the other hand, you can experience all these side effects and still stay on the pill safely. The pill will still effectively prevent pregnancy.

- Spotting, breakthrough bleeding, vaginal discharge
- Missed periods
- Nausea
- Acne may get better or worse
- Headaches may get better or worse
- Mood changes
- Change in sex drive
- Breast tenderness

Serious Side Effects

In some cases, birth control pills have caused blood pressure elevation, benign liver tumors, gall bladder disease, severe migraine headaches with neurological problems (blurred vision, blind spots, zigzag lines) and an increased risk for blood clots that can lead to stroke, heart attack, pulmonary embolism, and deep vein thrombosis. These complications are rare and often are associated with age (over 35), smoking cigarettes and hereditary conditions (runs in families).

If you have any of these symptoms, call Student Health Services at 715-836-5360, your doctor, or go to the nearest emergency room.

A: Severe Abdominal Pain
C: Severe chest pain associated with shortness of breath
H: Severe headaches
E: Eye problems, loss of vision, or blurred vision
S: Swelling or severe pain in one leg

Advantages

- Safe, effective, and reversible. Ovulation resumes quickly after stopping birth control pills.
- Menstrual benefits: shorter, lighter periods with less blood loss and cramping.
- Reduces the risk for ovarian and endometrial cancer. Suppresses endometriosis and ovarian cysts.
- Decreases acne and hirsutism.
- Decreases androgen sensitivity for women with PCOS.