

Oral contraception

Dr Katherine Gilmore and Dr Diana Mansour on the rules for different contraceptives

Key to abbreviations

CHC - combined hormonal contraception
COC - combined hormonal pill
DMPA - depot medroxyprogesterone acetate
LNG-IUS - levonogestrel-releasing intrauterine system (LNG-IUS 52-mirena)

POP - progestogen only pill
(UP)SI - (unprotected) sexual intercourse
AC - additional contraception/abstinence required for (number of days)
LAM - lactational amenorrhoea method

(Please note that women should be given information about both standard and tailored CHC regimen – see FSRH guideline on combined hormonal contraception. The information provided in this chart refers to standard regimens.)

Reference

1 Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare. Guideline: Combined Hormonal Contraceptive. London: FSRH, 2019

Type of contraception	Efficacy (% of women experiencing an unintended pregnancy in first year of use)		Starting or switching methods of contraception			Missed pills (Missed pill advice for oestradiol/nomegestrol and oestradiol valerate and dienogest containing CHCs – see FSRH guidance)*
	Typical use	Perfect use	Situation	Start when	Additional contraception (7 days)	
Combined hormonal contraception	9	0.3	Quick starting	Any time (if reasonably certain not pregnant)	Yes	<p>≥Two missed pills in week one or >48 hours late restarting CHC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take most recent missed pill AC (seven days) Continue pack If sex in previous seven days, emergency contraception may be needed <p>≥2 missed pills after week one and >seven days in packet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take most recent pill (even if two pills together) Continue pack AC (seven days) Finish packet and have hormone free interval as usual <p>≥Two missed pills and <seven days in packet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take most recent pill (even if two pills together) Continue rest of pack AC (seven days) Omit hormone-free interval of seven days, finish active tablets, immediately start new packet <p>If hormone-free interval of seven days extended <48 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional contraception needed
			Menstruating	≤Cycle day five	No	
				>Cycle day five	Yes	
			Amenorrhoeic	Any time (if reasonably certain not pregnant)	Yes	
			Post-miscarriage/abortion	≤Five days	No	
				>Five days	Yes	
			Postpartum (not breastfeeding)	≥ Day 21 postpartum (UKMEC2 if 3-6 weeks postpartum. Only if no other VTE risk factors. UKMEC1 if >6 weeks postpartum).	Yes	
			Postpartum (breastfeeding)	>Six weeks (Previously UKMEC3/4 if <6 months postpartum and fully/almost fully breastfeeding – this is now a UKMEC2.)	Yes	
			Switching CHC	Immediate start	No	
				Switching in week one or ≥day two of hormone-free interval	Yes	
			Switching from POP	Immediate start	Yes	
			Switching from IUD or LNG-IUS	Immediate start	Start CHC and remove IUD/LNG-IUS seven days later	
Switching from DMPA	<14 weeks from last injection	No				
	≥14 weeks from last injection	Yes				
Contraceptive implant	Immediate start	No				
Progestogen-only pill	9	0.3	Quick starting	Any time (if reasonably certain not pregnant)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If levonogestrel or norethisterone POP <3 hours late (desogestrel <12 hours) – missed pill taken and pack continued. No additional contraception needed If >3 hours late (>12 hours for desogestrel) then last missed pill taken, pack continued (48 hours) If >3 hours late (>12 hours desogestrel) and UPSI, emergency contraception should be considered
			Menstruating	≤Cycle day five	No	
				>Cycle day five	Yes	
			Amenorrhoeic	Any time (if reasonably certain not pregnant)	Yes	
			Post-miscarriage or abortion	≤Five days	No	
				>Five days	Yes	
			Postpartum (breastfeeding or bottle fed)	<Cycle day 21	No	
				≥Cycle day 22	Yes	
			Switching from LNG-IUS/IUD	Immediate start	Start POP and remove LNG-IUS/IUD seven days later	
			Switching from CHC	Immediate start	No	
				Switching in week one or ≥day two of hormone-free interval	Continue CHC for seven days	
			Switching from other hormonal methods	Immediate start if previous method used consistently and correctly	No	

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