

## MINI PILL (combined pill or oral contraceptive pill)

### What is the mini pill?

The mini pill is a daily tablet (also known as the progestogen only pill). The mini pill contains the hormone progestogen. Progestogen is similar to the hormone produced by the ovaries.

### How effective is the mini pill?

If used correctly the mini pill can be over 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. If you miss a pill, vomit within 2 hours of taking a pill, have severe diarrhoea or take certain medications, it might only be 93% effective. The mini pill needs to be taken at the same time each day. If it is 3 or more hours late then it will not work correctly.

### How does the mini pill work?

The mini pill works by thickening the fluid around the cervix (opening to the uterus/womb). This helps to prevent sperm from entering. Sometimes the mini pill can also prevent the ovaries from releasing an egg.

### How do I use the mini pill?

You take the mini pill by swallowing 1 pill (tablet) around the same time every day. It may be helpful to take the mini at the same time you do another activity every day (such as cleaning your teeth) or you could enter a reminder into your phone. Once you have taken all the pills in a packet, you start a new packet. The mini pill pack contains 28 hormone pills. There are no sugar pills.

### When does it start to be effective?

When you start the mini pill for the first time or after a break it can take up to 3 days to start working to prevent pregnancy. This depends on the timing of your menstrual cycle and if you are already using contraception. Speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for more information.

### Where can I get the mini pill?

Your doctor or nurse will provide a script which you can take to the pharmacy, who will sell you the mini pill. It will be cheaper if you have a healthcare card.

### What stops the mini pill from working?

The mini pill may not work if:

- it is taken more than 3 hours late
- you vomit within 2 hours of taking it
- you have very severe diarrhoea
- you are taking some medications or natural remedies (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).

### What is good about the mini pill?

- It starts working quickly.
- It is a low dose of hormone.
- It can be used while breast feeding.
- Once stopped your fertility quickly returns to what is normal for you.
- It is another contraceptive option if you have difficulty taking the hormone oestrogen. The Pill (combined pill or oral contraceptive pill) and vaginal ring (NuvaRing) contain oestrogen and progestogen. The mini pill only contains progestogen.

### Are there any side effects from taking the mini pill?

Possible side effects for a small number of users can include:

- irregular vaginal bleeding
- sore/ tender breasts
- headaches
- bloating
- changes to your skin
- mood changes.

These side effects often settle with time. The mini pill has not been shown to cause weight gain.

### Disclaimer

*This factsheet is for general information purposes only and should not be relied on as medical information. You should seek specific medical consultation for your individual circumstances.*

### Can the mini pill cause any serious health problems?

There are no known serious health risks from taking the mini pill.

### Reasons why the mini pill might not be a good option for you:

- Find taking or remembering a daily tablet difficult.
- Are taking certain types of medication which might stop the mini pill from working (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).
- Have breast cancer or have been treated for breast cancer.
- Have severe liver disease.

### What if I miss a mini pill?

- Take the missed pill as soon as you notice (this may mean taking 2 pills on the same day).
- Continue to take your pills as normal.
- Abstain from sex or use condoms for the next 3 days.
- If you have had sex without a condom since you missed your pill, you may need emergency contraception (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).

### Can I take the mini pill after I have had a baby?

You can start the mini pill straight after you give birth, even if you are breast feeding.

### What if I am taking the mini pill and I want to become pregnant?

You can stop the mini pill at any time and your fertility will quickly return to what is normal for you.

### What else should I know about the mini pill?

- The mini pill does not protect you from sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- It is good to be prepared and keep a supply of pills. If you run out of pills and cannot see a doctor or nurse for a new script, speak to a pharmacist. Some pharmacists will give you a small supply of pills without a script if you show them your old pill packet.

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