

## PROGESTOGEN ONLY PILLS (Mini Pill)

### What are progestogen only pills?

The progestogen only pill is a daily tablet. The progestogen only pill contains the hormone progestogen. Progestogen is similar to the hormone produced by the ovaries.

Progestogen only pills which have the progestogen levonorgestrel (brand name Microlut) or norethisterone (brand name Noriday) are sometimes also called the mini pill. These pills have 28 hormone pills with no sugar pills.

A newer progestogen only pill which has the progestogen hormone drospirenone (brand name Slinda) has 24 hormone pills and 4 sugar pills.

### How effective are progestogen only pills?

If used correctly the progestogen only pills can be over 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. If you miss a pill, vomit within 3 hours of taking a pill, have severe diarrhoea or take certain medications, it might only be 93% effective.

The progestogen only pills containing levonorgestrel or norethisterone need to be taken at the same time each day. If either of these pills are 3 or more hours late then it will not work correctly.

If the progestogen only pill with drospirenone is 24 or more hours late then it will not work correctly.

### How do progestogen only pills work?

The progestogen only pill works by thickening the fluid around the cervix (opening to the uterus/womb). This helps to prevent sperm from entering.

The progestogen only pill with drospirenone prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg. Sometimes the other progestogen only pills can also prevent the ovaries from releasing an egg.

### How do I use the progestogen only pill?

You take it by swallowing 1 pill (tablet) around the same time every day. It may be helpful to take the progestogen only pill 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.

### When does it start to be effective?

When you start the progestogen only pill for the first time or after a break it can take up to 7 days to start working to prevent pregnancy. This depends on the timing of your menstrual cycle, which progestogen only pill you are using and if you are already using contraception. Speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for more information.

### Where can I get the progestogen only pill?

Your doctor or nurse will provide a script which you can take to the pharmacy, who will sell you the progestogen only pill. The progestogen only pills with levonorgestrel or norethisterone will be cheaper if you have a healthcare card.

### What stops the progestogen only pill from working?

The progestogen only pill may not work if:

- it is taken more than 3 hours late for the pills containing levonorgestrel (Microlut) or norethisterone (Noriday)
- it is taken more than 24 hours late for the pill containing drospirenone (Slinda)
- you vomit within 3 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 progestogen only 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 progesterone. The progesterone only pill only contains progesterone.

### Are there any side effects from taking the progesterone only pill?

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

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

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

### Can the progesterone only pill cause any serious health problems?

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

### Reasons why the progesterone only 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 progesterone only 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 progesterone only pill?

Progesterone only pills with levonorgestrel or norethisterone:

- 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).

Progesterone only pills with drospirenone:

- 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 7 days.
- If you have had sex without a condom in the 7 days before missing a pill, you may need emergency contraception or to skip the sugar pills and start a new pack in the hormone section. This depends on where you are up to in the pill packet (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).

### What happens if I get pregnant while I am taking the progesterone only pill?

The progesterone only pill will not harm the pregnancy. It is safe to continue the pregnancy (and stop the progesterone only pill) or to have an abortion.

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

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

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

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

### What else should I know about the progesterone only pill?

- The progesterone only 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.

#### 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.*