



Short-acting Contraceptives

What is it?

Short-acting contraceptives prevent pregnancies but are either single use or only last for a short time. The two main types of short-acting contraceptives are hormonal or barrier method.

Hormonal contraceptives contain synthetic hormones that prevent pregnancy. These hormones are called oestrogens and progestogens. They copy the hormones produced by your ovaries. They are sometimes used to treat medical issues.

The three forms of hormonal contraceptives are:

- **Combined Hormonal Contraceptive (CHC) pills** – which contain oestrogen and progestogen
- **Progestogen-only pills (POPs)** – which contain only progestogen; they are useful for people who can't use oestrogen-containing contraceptives
- **Vaginal ring (NuvaRing)** – a contraceptive product inserted into the vagina; it contains a combination of oestrogen and progestogen

Barrier method contraceptives prevent sperm from reaching the uterus where it could fertilise an egg. They are worn during sex and then removed after. The two main forms of barrier method are:

- **Condom** – this covers the penis and needs to be worn during sex. Condoms are single use and can also help to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- **Diaphragm** – this covers the cervix and needs to be inserted into the vagina correctly before sex.

You do not need to see your GP to purchase barrier method contraception.

There are pros and cons of all types of short-acting contraceptives. Your choice depends on your medical history and personal preferences.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may discuss your medical history and preferences. Together, you will work out what is best for you. During these chats your GP may:

- Suggest a pregnancy test to make sure you are not pregnant
- Give you clear information for how to best use your contraceptive

If you are planning to use a hormonal contraceptive, your GP will:

- Explain the expected bleeding patterns after you start using a hormonal contraceptive
- Discuss other side effects
- Explain how to start using hormonal contraceptives

What will my GP do in the future?

You may not necessarily need to see your GP regularly for follow up. However, your GP may want to:

- Know if you have any trouble with your contraceptive, such as a side effect or difficulty with the directions
- Check your weight and blood pressure
- Recommend cervical screening and a test for sexually transmitted infections

If you need to switch to a different contraceptive product, your GP will explain how to do this.

Starting hormonal contraceptives

There are two ways to commence hormonal contraceptives

Traditional start method

- Start during the first 5 days of your menstrual cycle
- Contraception is effective immediately

"Quick-start" method

- Start at any other time in your menstrual cycle
- It will take up to seven days depending on the type of contraceptive - check with your GP
- Use condoms or don't have vaginal sex during this time to prevent unwanted pregnancy

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What can I do?

Take or use your hormonal contraceptive as directed. If you miss days, it may stop the contraceptive from working properly.

Talk to your GP if you are having trouble taking your contraception, or if you experience any of the side effects mentioned by your GP or listed on your medicine information. If you are prescribed other medication, make sure your GP knows you are using a hormonal contraceptive. This is because they can interact with other medications they may prescribe.

Practice safe sex. Hormonal contraceptives do not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

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| ☐ What if I forget to take my contraceptive pill? | ☐ Do I still need to use condoms? |
| ☐ What if I forget to change my NuvaRing? | ☐ What are the side effects? |
| ☐ What if I want to get pregnant? | |

Where can I learn more?

To read more about using hormonal contraceptives, visit the Family Planning NSW website at fpnsw.org.au:

- [Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill](#)
- [Progestogen-Only Pill \(POP\)](#)
- [Vaginal Ring](#)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

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