



The Mini-pill (Progesterone only)

Progesterone-only pills have been marketed in the U.S. since 1973. These pills contain the same progesterone that is in the combination pill, but in smaller doses. Progesterone is an effective contraceptive if present continuously.

HOW DO THE PROGESTERONE-ONLY PILLS WORK?

The mini-pill works through multiple mechanisms of action. Progesterone prevents capacitation of sperm. The sperm is weakened by progesterone and is not easily released from seminal fluid. Progesterone also slows egg transport through the fallopian tube making implantation less likely. Although a rare possibility, there is a slightly higher rate of tubal pregnancy on the progesterone-only pill compared to the combination pill. Progesterone makes the uterine wall unreceptive to an egg by inhibiting implantation. Through a feedback system, the mini-pill interrupts the signal to the ovaries to ovulate, thus inhibiting ovulation. Progesterone also thickens cervical mucus creating a barrier to fertilization.

EFFECTIVENESS

The theoretical effectiveness rate of the progesterone-only pill is slightly less than that of combination oral contraceptive pill. This is because the lower amount of hormone in the progesterone-only pill allows for ovulation, relying on the mechanisms listed above for pregnancy prevention.

COMMON COMPLICATIONS

The most common complaints with the mini-pill are irregular or missed periods. Spotting is also common with the progesterone only pill.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TAKING PROGESTERONE-ONLY PILLS

1. Take one pill every single day, at the same time every day. Never miss a day.
2. If you miss one pill, take it as soon as you remember. Use another method of birth control until your next period.
3. If you miss two pills, take one of the missed pills as soon as you remember, as well as your regular pill for that day. Take the other pill plus the regular one the next day. Use another method of birth control until your next period.
4. If you notice any changes—depression, irritability, change in sex drive—call the office for an appointment. Sometimes switching brands helps.
5. Though extremely rare, watch for pill danger signals: abdominal pain, chest pain, headaches, eye problems, blurred vision, severe leg pain (calf or thigh).