**USING COMBINED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS**
**(ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES)**

**Taking the Birth Control Pill**

1. Take ONE PILL EVERY DAY AT THE SAME TIME for as long as you don’t want to become pregnant.
2. Take the pills from left to right
3. When you get to the placebo pills at the end of the package, continue to take them the same way.
4. When you take the last pill in the package, start a new package the very next day.
5. As long as you do this, you are protected from pregnancy for the entire month.

**How do I start my pills?**

There are three different ways to start taking birth control pills.

6. **First Day of Period Start:** Start your pills on the first day of your period. Continue to take one pill every day at the same time. With this method, you do not need to use a backup method as the pills are effective in preventing pregnancy right away.
7. **Quick Start:** Take your first pill today at a good time for you. Continue to take one pill every day at the same time. With this method, you need to use backup pregnancy protection (such as condoms or abstinence) for at least 7 days.
8. **Sunday Start:** Take your first pill on the first Sunday following the start of your period. If your period starts on a Sunday, start your pill that day. Continue to take one pill every day at the same time. With this method, you need to use backup pregnancy protection (such as condoms or abstinence) for at least 7 days.

**What if I miss a period while using birth control pills?**

- It is not unusual to occasionally skip a period completely while using the pill. Remember, pills can make your flow lighter so even a very small amount of blood is considered a period.
- If you do miss a period and you have no signs of pregnancy, continue with your next pack of pills on schedule.
- If you miss another period the next month, continue with your pills but go to a clinic or your doctor and have a pregnancy test done. Pills are not known to harm an early pregnancy.

**What if I miss taking a pill for one day, or take it late?**

- Consider using a backup method such as condoms or you could abstain (not have sex) for the first 7 days after you missed the pill.
- Take one pill as soon as you remember and your regular pill at the usual time (you may be taking 2 pills on the same day: one at the time you remember and the other at your regular time).
What if I miss taking more than one pill?
If you miss more than one pill, what to do depends on how much estrogen (one of the hormones) is in your type of birth control pill.

- Use a backup method such as condoms or abstinence and consider using emergency contraception (call 1-888-NOT-2-LATE to find the nearest place to obtain ECP).
- Call the SEX SENSE Line at 1-800-739-7367 or 604-731-7803 in the Lower Mainland to find out the most effective way to continue using your birth control pills.

NB: Spotting can result from missing 2 or more pills in a row. Your menstrual period will probably be delayed until the hormonal pills are completed (end of the pack).

What are some possible side effects from the pill?
Some people experience minor effects such as nausea, breast tenderness, weight gain or loss, mild headaches, dizziness, or spotting (breakthrough bleeding) during the first three months on the pills.

**DO NOT STOP TAKING YOUR PILLS**
These minor symptoms usually stop within the first three months of taking pills. If these symptoms continue after three months, return to your clinic or doctor for follow-up. You may be switched to a different type of pill.

There are some serious danger signs that all women using the pill should be aware of. These are:

- A abdominal pain, especially on the right side of your stomach, below your rib cage
- C chest or arm pain, shortness of breath, coughing up blood
- H headaches, severe and not relieved by aspirin or Tylenol
- E eye problems, blurred vision, flashing lights, double vision, blindness
- S swelling, redness, numbness, tingling or pain in the legs

Seek medical attention immediately if you have any of the above symptoms.

What if I have sex and don’t use Birth Control?
Did you know that ...for up to 120 hours (5 days)...after sex...you can take emergency pills to avoid becoming pregnant? (The sooner they are taken after an episode of unprotected intercourse the more effective they are)...AND for 7 days...after sex...you can have an IUD put in, so you won’t become pregnant. Not all doctors know about this. If you need to know more or would like the phone numbers of doctors or clinics near you that have emergency birth control, call the SEX SENSE line at 1-800-739-7367 or 604-731-7803 in the lower mainland; or 1-888-NOT-2-LATE