

### What is the progestogen-only pill?

The progestogen-only pill is also called the mini-pill. It is a form of oral contraception that you take every day at the same time to prevent pregnancy. It contains a very small amount of progestogen, which is a hormone. Progestogens are similar to the natural hormone, progesterone, which you produce in your ovaries.

The mini-pill comes in a pack with 28 pills, this will last 28-days. Every pill is a hormone (progestogen) pill and you don't have a break between packs. Unlike the combined hormonal contraceptive pill, there are no hormone-free or pill-free days, so there are no sugar pills.

### How does it work?

The mini-pill mainly works by making the cervical mucus at the neck of the womb thicker, so that sperm cannot get through to meet an egg. For some women it also stops the release of an egg (ovulation) each month.

### How well does it work?

If used correctly the mini-pill can be very effective at preventing pregnancy. If used correctly it is 99.5% effective. But in real life (typical use) it is not quite as effective; usually it is about 93% effective. This is because you have to remember to take the mini-pill at exactly the same time every day. It will not be effective if taken more than 3 hours late. The mini-pill might not work if you have vomiting or severe diarrhoea. Taking other medications can also make the mini-pill less effective. These medications include some epileptic medications or herbal remedies. Talk to your doctor for more information.

### Who can take the mini-pill?

Most women can use the mini-pill. You may not be able to use the mini-pill if you:

- have breast cancer
- have severe liver disease
- have unusual bleeding from your vagina
- use medicines or herbal remedies which make the mini-pill less effective

### Advantages

- works well if taken at exactly the same time every day
- has a low dose of progestogen so may cause less side effects than some other methods of contraception

- is useful for women who can't use the combined pill which contains oestrogen
- can be used by women who are breastfeeding
- does not affect fertility- fertility will return to normal straight away when you stop taking the mini-pill

### Disadvantages

- does not protect against sexually transmissible infections (STIs)
- can be less effective than some other methods of contraception - you must remember to take it at exactly the same time every day
- may make your periods change - you might have:
  - some bleeding between periods
  - irregular bleeding pattern
  - periods that stop completely
- can have hormonal side-effects including:
  - headaches
  - acne
  - mood changes

Talk to your doctor if you develop any unwanted side effects. It may be helpful to change the type of mini-pill or the type of contraceptive you are using. If you are at risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) you can use condoms at the same time as taking the mini-pill.

### How do I take the mini-pill?

You must take the mini-pill at the same time every day. You can fall pregnant if you take your mini-pill more than 3 hours later than usual. It can be helpful to set a reminder on your phone or put your pill pack next to your toothbrush. This can help you remember to take it at the same time each day.

You will usually start taking the mini-pill within the first 5 days of the menstrual cycle (day 1 is the first day of your period). It will start to work immediately. If you start the mini-pill at another time during your menstrual cycle, it will start to work after you have taken the first 3 pills correctly. You should use another form of contraception such as condoms until you have taken the first 3 pills to avoid pregnancy.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about when to start taking the mini-pill.

### What if I miss taking a pill?

If you are more than 3 hours late taking the mini-pill, it will not be effective at preventing pregnancy. If this happens, you should:

- take one pill as soon as possible and take the next pill at the usual time
- continue taking your pills as usual (it will start to work again after you have taken 3 pills correctly)
- use condoms or don't have sex until you have taken 3 pills correctly

If you had sex while you weren't protected and did not use any other contraception, you may be at risk of pregnancy. You should consider using the emergency contraceptive pill, available from a pharmacy without a prescription.

If you vomit within 2 hours of taking the mini-pill, take another pill straight away. If you keep vomiting you may not be protected from pregnancy. Follow the advice above for when you miss a pill. If you have severe diarrhoea the pill may also not work properly.

Contact your doctor or a Family Planning NSW clinic for more information. You can ring the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886.

### Where can I get the mini-pill?

The mini-pill is available at the pharmacy. You will need a prescription from your doctor to get the mini-pill. You should have a check-up with your doctor or Family Planning NSW clinic every 12 months.

### For more information

**Family Planning NSW Talkline** –  
[www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline](http://www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline) or 1300 658 886

**National Relay Service** (for deaf people) –  
13 36 77

**TIS National's interpreting service** –  
131 450

**Visit your nearest Family Planning NSW clinic** –  
[www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics](http://www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics)

**Family Planning NSW client resource on contraception** – [What suits me?](#)

**Family Planning NSW factsheet** –  
[Emergency contraception](#)