

Progestogen Only Pill



Quick Facts

Method

Hormonal

Effectiveness

93 - 99%

Return to Fertility

No delay

Availability

Prescription required



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What is it?

The Progestogen Only Pill (POP) contains the hormone progestogen. The POP must be taken every day, without a break, to give the best protection against pregnancy.

How does it work?

The POP prevents pregnancy by:

- making the mucus in the cervix thicker, so sperm cannot enter into the uterus
- changing the lining of the uterus, so a fertilised egg cannot be implanted
- sometimes stopping the body from releasing an egg every month (this varies between cycles, and from person to person).

How effective is it?

With typical use, the POP is 93% effective at preventing pregnancy. Effectiveness depends on the age of a person and how consistently the POP is taken.

Who can take it?

The POP is very safe and suitable for most people, including those over 40, and those who are breastfeeding. A health professional will take a detailed medical history to ensure the POP is suitable for you.

The POP may not be suitable for those who:

- may forget to take it at the same time every day
- have ever had breast cancer
- take certain prescribed medication, such as some epilepsy drugs.

How is it taken?

The POP comes in monthly packages, with 28 active hormone pills.

The POP can be started at any time during a menstrual cycle. If started during the first five days of a period, the POP is effective immediately. If started at any other time, the POP becomes effective once three consecutive daily pills have been taken.

The POP must be taken at the same time every day.

Late or missed pills

If the POP is taken more than three hours late, the risk of pregnancy is increased. This is because the mucus in the cervix begins to thin, allowing sperm to pass through into the uterus.

The late or missed POP should be taken as soon as possible and then continued at the regular time. Do not rely on the POP until three consecutive daily pills have been taken, and consider emergency contraception if there is a risk of pregnancy (see below).

“Sam takes the progestogen only pill at 7am every day. They sleep in on Sunday morning and take the pill at 11am, as soon as they wake up. As Sam is more than three hours late taking the pill, they need to take a daily pill for three consecutive days before they can rely on the POP to protect against pregnancy. They resume taking the next pill at 7am on Monday morning. Sam uses condoms with their partner until after they have taken the third consecutive pill on the Wednesday”.

Risk of pregnancy

The chance of a pregnancy occurring while using the POP is greater if:

- the POP is taken more than three hours late
- other prescribed medications are taken, such as some epilepsy drugs, and some medications used to treat tuberculosis or HIV
- herbal medicines such as St John’s Wort are taken
- vomiting or severe diarrhoea occurs within two hours of taking the pill.

Emergency contraception

Different methods of emergency contraception are available, such as emergency contraceptive pills and the copper IUD. Emergency contraception is most effective when used as soon as possible after unprotected sex, so visit a doctor, pharmacist, or ring the Sexual Health Helpline as soon as possible.

Things to consider

The POP:

- Is an effective form of contraception if taken correctly (needs to be taken at the same time every day)
- May alter menstrual patterns
- Can be used by those who cannot take or tolerate oestrogen
- Is safe to use while breastfeeding
- Is safer for those who smoke
- Does not increase the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
- Allows fertility to return quickly after stopping

The progestogen only pill does not protect against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

SHQ is on Whadjuk land. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country across Western Australia.



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