

## **Fact Sheet**

### **Progestin-Only Birth Control Pills (Progestin-only Pills)**

#### **What are progestin-only pills?**

Progestin-only pills are a birth control method that uses one hormone, called a progestin, to prevent pregnancy. To prevent pregnancy you must take one pill at the same time every day even on the days you do not have sex. Progestin-only pills come in 28-day packs. After you finish all the pills in one pack you must start the next pack right away to continue to prevent pregnancy. This method of birth control is reversible meaning once you stop taking the mini-pill you can get pregnant.

#### **How do progestin-only pills work?**

Progestin-only pills work by preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from a woman's ovary). They also make the mucus in a woman's cervix (the opening to her uterus) thick so that sperm cannot get into the uterus to reach the egg. Progestin-only pills also thin the lining of a woman's uterus so that an egg cannot attach and develop into a pregnancy.

#### **How well do progestin-only pills work to prevent pregnancy?**

Progestin-only pills work very well to prevent pregnancy. How well they work depends on if you take them the correct way all the time. If 100 women use progestin-only pills exactly right for one year only one woman might get pregnant. If the same 100 women use progestin-only pills for one year but do not always take them the right way, about 9 women might get pregnant.

#### **What do women like about progestin-only pills?**

- The mini-pill is a very effective method of birth control.
- This method of birth control is reversible (not permanent).
- Progestin-only pills are private (no one but you needs to know).
- You do not need to interrupt sex to use the the pills.
- You can usually get pregnant soon after you stop taking progestin-only pills.
- Some women may have less pain and bleeding with their periods.
- Taking progestin-only pills may reduce the symptoms some women have before their periods, like breast tenderness, mood changes, and stomach or back pain.
- Taking progestin-only pills may reduce the pain women have with endometriosis.
- Women who are breast feeding can use the progestin-only pills.
- Women who cannot take birth control pills that contain estrogen because of their age, because they smoke, or because of other medical conditions can use progestin-only pills

#### **What do women not like about progestin-only pills?**

- Progestin-only pills DO NOT protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- You must remember to take this pill every day at the same time.
- You will probably have changes in your periods like spotting between periods, lighter or heavier periods, or no periods at all.
- The pills may interact with other medicines you take which may change how well the progestin-only pills or the other medicines work.

**What are the possible side effects of taking progestin-only pills?**

- Changes in your period
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in weight
- Breast pain or breast tenderness
- Bloating and constipation
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Less desire for sex
- Changes in mood, nervousness, or depression
- Feeling dizzy
- Changes in skin (acne)
- Changes in hair (hair loss)

**Sometimes progestin-only pills can cause very serious health problems.**

- ✓ DO NOT use progestin-only pills if you:
  - Have breast cancer
  - Are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.
  - Have an allergy to progestin or the other ingredients in the pills
- ✓ Talk with your health care provider about whether the pill is safe for you if you have:
  - Liver disease or liver tumor
  - Lupus
  - HIV, tuberculosis or a seizure disorder and use certain types of medications
  - Had a certain type of surgery for obesity
  - Had breast cancer in the past

**Call your health center right away if you have any of the following:**

- New or worse headaches
- Shortness of breath
- Pain in your chest
- Sudden changes in your vision
- Very heavy vaginal bleeding
- Lower stomach pain
- New or worse depression
- A new lump in your breast
- Missed 2 periods in a row or missed 1 period after not taking the pill correctly, or think you might be pregnant

**Contact your health care provider** if you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or if you want to stop using mini-pills and start using another method.

- To decrease your risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), use a latex condom every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Emergency contraception (EC) prevents pregnancy when used no later than 3-5 days after unprotected sex. If you need EC or want more information, call your health care provider, family planning counselor, or pharmacist