



Leaflet: Combined Pill and Seven Day Ru

Combined Pill and Seven Day Rule

This leaflet is for women taking the combined oral contraceptive pill ('the pill')

Ovulation (and therefore pregnancy) can occur even if one pill is missed, particularly if the missed pill is at the end or beginning of the packet. It is important that the pill free interval is never longer than 7 days. If regular taking of pills is disrupted for any reason (even if you forget to take it for 1 day) it takes 7 days of taking the pill for it to become effective again. This is called the '7-day guideline'. Common situations where the 7-day guideline is advised are as follows.

Forgotten or missed pills

If a pill is missed for any reason:

- ◆ If it is less than 12 hours late, take the pill straightaway. Take the further pills as usual. No further action is needed.
- ◆ If it is more than 12 hours late, take the most recent missed pill straightaway (leave any earlier missed pills in the packet). Take the remaining pills as usual but also use extra contraceptive precautions for the next 7 days (such as condoms). If there are less than 7 pills in the pack when restarting after the missed one, when the pack is finished go straight into the next pack without the usual 7 day break. (If you take an 'everyday' type of pill then miss out the 7 inactive 'dummy' pills and start the first 'active' pill in the next pack.)

Vomiting and diarrhoea

Mild diarrhoea will not stop the pill from being absorbed. If you vomit within 3 hours of taking a pill or have severe diarrhoea the pill may not be absorbed. If this happens, carry on taking your pills as usual, but use extra contraceptive precautions (such as condoms) for as long as the illness lasts, and then for 7 further days (whilst the pill becomes effective again). Again, if there are less than 7 pills left in the pack when the illness is over, finish the pack, but go straight into the next pack without a break.

Antibiotics

A course of antibiotics (and some other medicines) may interfere with the absorption of the pill. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if a prescribed medicine will affect the pill. For many antibiotics, the 7-day guideline will apply. That is, carry on taking the pill but:

- ◆ Use other methods of contraception (such as condoms) whilst taking antibiotics.
- ◆ Once the course of antibiotics has finished, for a further 7 days *continue* to use other methods of contraception (whilst the pill becomes effective again).
- ◆ Once the course of antibiotics has finished, if there are less than 7 pills in a current pack remaining, go straight into the next pack without a break.