

## **Extended combined oral contraceptive Regime**

Taking the pill continually has been shown to give better contraceptive cover and many patients prefer this as they have less days of bleeding over the year. Many ladies have no periods after taking their pill like this for more than 7 months. This regime is especially good for women who suffer from heavy or painful periods or headaches related to periods.

Taking the pill continuously in this way is off label (i.e. different to the way advised in the information leaflet inside the pack). However, it is widely used in this way and there is good evidence to show that it is safe.

### **HOW TO TAKE YOUR PILLS**

When starting for the first time, take your first pill on the first to fourth day of your next period, you will then be covered immediately. If you start later than day 4 you will need to use extra precaution (condoms or abstinence) for a further 7 days.

Take one pill every day at the same time and continue to do this unless you start bleeding for 3 days. Note it may be several weeks or even months before you have a bleed.

#### **When you bleed for 3 days**

**If you have already taken 21 pills since your last break** you can stop taking your pill for 4 days. You are then likely to have a withdrawal bleed. (Throw away those 4 pills in the pack so you will know which day to restart). Restart your pill after 4 days, even if you are still bleeding. Then continue taking the pill daily, running the packs together, until your next 3 day bleed. Then stop for 4 days as above.

**If you have not taken 21 pills since your last break** continue taking the pills daily despite the bleeding, you can then stop on day 21 if still bleeding.

If you get **irregular bleeding frequently** or **bleeding after intercourse** and are concerned, then please contact your GP, it may indicate something else is going on such as chlamydia for example.

We recommend that you do an **STI screen annually or with a change in sexual partner** which ever is sooner. The combined pill will prevent pregnancy but won't prevent STIs, so we advise that you use condoms for the first couple of weeks of every new relationship and until you have done STI screening.

You may be able to order an STI screening kits via the post. For more information have a look at "let's talk about it" website. [Order a test online - Let's Talk about It \(letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk\)](http://letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk)

## **Missed Pill rules – extended pill regime**

### **If one pill is missed, anywhere in the pack (ie 24 - 48 hours late taking your pill)**

- The last pill missed should be taken immediately, even if it means taking two pills at the same time or in one day.
- Then continue taking the pills as usual.
- No additional contraception is needed.

Emergency contraception is not needed if just one pill has been missed. However, it should be considered if other pills have been missed recently – consult your GP and use extra precaution until this time.

### **If two or more pills are missed (ie more than 48 hours late)**

- The last pill missed should be taken now, even if it means taking two pills at the same time or in one day.
- Any earlier missed pills should be left.

The next step depends on how many pills you have taken since your last 4 day break.

- **If the pills are missed in the first week after a break (ie pills 1-7):** [emergency contraception](#) should be considered if you have had unprotected sex in the pill-free interval or the first week of the pill packet, consult your GP. If no sexual activity during this time restart taking your pill daily and use extra precautions (condoms or abstinence) for 7 days.
- **If the pills are missed in the second or third week of a pack (ie pills 8-21)** Restart the pill as soon as you remember and use extra precautions for the next 7 days. Emergency contraception is not required as long as in the preceding 7 days, the pill has been taken correctly. You will need to take the pill for a further 21 days before having your next pill free interval.
- **If the pills are missed more than 21 days after the last pill free interval** Restart the pill as soon as you remember.
  - **If less than 7 pills were missed-** you won't need any extra contraceptive precautions.
  - **If more than 7 pills were missed,** restart taking the pill and you will need to use extra precautions (condoms or abstinence) for the next 7 days. Consult your GP if you have had unprotected intercourse during this time or in the 7 days after restarting the pill, as you may need Emergency contraception.