

Instructions for starting and using combined contraceptive products

Combined contraceptive products (contraceptive pills, patches and rings) contain both estrogen and progestin. Their contraceptive efficacy is based primarily on suppression of ovulation. When used correctly, the contraceptive effect of combined products is very good. In addition to birth control, the combined contraceptive products can be used for the treatment of menstrual-related symptoms (profuse menstrual bleeding or severe pain) and the treatment of acne. Fertility will return to normal after you stop taking the product.

Combined contraceptive products do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases. At the beginning of a new sexual relationship, both parties need to have tests taken for sexually transmitted diseases before giving up the use of condoms.

When visiting health care, always remember to mention that you are using a pharmacological contraceptive product.

Benefits of combined contraceptive products

The combined products have multiple beneficial health effects. Menstrual pain and the amount of menstrual bleeding may be reduced and the menstrual cycle may become more regular. Some of the products have a therapeutic effect on acne. The risk of benign ovarian tumours, as well as the risk of ovarian, uterine and bowel cancer is reduced.

Side effects of combined contraceptive products

The occurrence of side effects is individual and for the majority of users there are none or they are mild. The most common side effects include metrorrhagia, breast tenderness, nausea, headaches, and mood changes. It is usual that the initial symptoms subside during the first months of use. You should continue using the product for at least three months. Combined contraceptive products slightly increase the risk of breast cancer.

There is a wide range of products available, and most women will find a suitable product by experimentation. The combined product in itself does not cause weight gain, but some women may experience swelling or increased appetite.

Using a combined hormonal contraceptive **increases your risk of developing a blood clot** compared with not using one. The risk of developing a blood clot is highest during the first year of using the product for the first time or after having a break for 4 weeks or more, which is why intermittent use of the product is not recommended. The risk of developing a blood clot increases with age. Other factors that significantly increase the risk include obesity, smoking and history of blood clots in immediate family (parents and siblings). Women who have migraine with aura are not allowed to use combined hormonal contraceptives. Surgery, plaster casts, prolonged bed rest and certain illnesses also increase the risk.

Contact the Health Care centre immediately if you notice any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Unexplained serious pain or swelling of one leg
- Sudden unexplained breathlessness or rapid breathing which might be accompanied by chest pains
- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg
- Trouble speaking or understanding
- Loss of vision
- Severe or unusual headache/migraine

EHKÄISYN HOITOPOLKU

Suomen Nuorisolääkärit ry

CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Product chosen: _____

Starting the product

- Start on the first day of menstrual bleeding, the contraceptive effect begins immediately
- Start on the 2nd to 5th day of menstrual bleeding and use a condom as a backup method for the first week
- Start immediately (rule out pregnancy first) and use a condom as a backup method for the first week
- Changing over from another contraceptive:

Taking the product

The instructions may vary depending on the product and your personal circumstances and deviate from the instructions in the package. Try to take the pill at the same time every day. You are advised to set a reminder on your mobile phone, at least initially. A delay of less than 12 hours will not affect the contraceptive efficacy. If the pill is delayed more than 12 hours, please check the package leaflet or the pharmaceutical firm's website for instructions. If necessary, consult your health care.

Menstruation usually begins during the tablet-free interval, and the bleeding has not necessarily stopped before you start a new tablet strip. You should not stop using a combined product that works for you, even if the need for contraception ceases temporarily.

A break in taking the product should never be longer than 7 days!

Combined contraceptive pill

- 1 tablet a day for as long as a tablet strip lasts, followed by a break of 4 days (or, if you prefer, 3–7 days)
- 1 tablet a day for as long as 2–4 tablet strips last, followed by a break of 4 days (or, if you prefer, 3–7 days)
- 1 tablet a day for as long as a tablet strip lasts, then 1 tablet a day until menstrual bleeding starts. Pause for 4 days when bleeding starts
- Make sure that you are always using at least one whole tablet strip before the next break

Vaginal ring

- Insert the ring into the vagina and leave it there for three weeks, then remove the ring and have a break of 4 days (or, if you prefer, 3–7 days) before inserting a new ring
- Insert the ring into the vagina and leave it there for three weeks and then replace the ring without a break. You can use 2–4 rings consecutively, after which you should have a break of 4 days (or, if you prefer, 3–7 days)

Contraceptive patch

- Stick the patch on your skin for one week, then remove the old patch and stick a new one on a different part of your skin. After the third patch you should have a break of 4 days (or, if you prefer, 3–7 days). After the break, stick a new patch on your skin
- Stick the patch on your skin for one week, then remove the old patch and stick a new one on a different part of your skin. You can use 6–12 patches consecutively, after which you should have a break of 4 days (or, if you prefer, 3–7 days)

Remember to make an appointment for a birth control follow-up visit after starting the product.