

Fact Sheet

The Mini Pill (Progesterone Only Pill [POP])

A contraceptive option for breastfeeding women

womensnewbornhealth.com.au

Contraception after giving birth is very important. Even though you have just had a baby, and being intimate with your partner may not be on your mind, you still need to consider your contraceptive options.

It is recommended that you space your children at least 12-18 months apart as this gives your body time to recover. This also decreases the risk of your next baby being premature (born early) or not growing properly in the womb.

If you are breastfeeding you cannot take the usual 'Pill', also called the Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill (COCP), because the hormones in the COCP will decrease (dry up) your breast milk. (After 6 weeks you may start the COCP).

The Progesterone only Pill (POP) contains only one hormone which means it does not affect breastfeeding.

Like the COCP, the POP needs to be taken every day to be effective.

How does the POP work?

The hormone in the POP changes the mucous of the cervix (neck of the womb) so that sperm cannot swim up into the uterus. Usually the POP does not stop you ovulating (producing an egg each month) but in a small number of women this pill also stops ovulation.

How should this pill be taken?

The POP should be started within 21 days of your baby being born and can be started straightaway after the baby's birth. If you wait longer than 21 days before starting the mini-pill you will need extra contraception (condoms) until you start the pill including the first week after starting it.

It is very important that the mini-pill be taken at the same time each day. If you are more than three hours late taking this pill you will need to take the pill you missed straight away, and use condoms when you have sex, until you have taken the pill at the correct time of day for three days in a row.

If you have vomiting or diarrhoea you may not absorb the POP, so you should also follow the advice about what to do if you miss a pill.

Can I become pregnant when taking the POP?

If you are fully (exclusively) breast feeding and take the POP correctly it is more than 99% effective. Once you stop, or decrease, your breastfeeding the POP is 98% effective as long as it is taken correctly.

What will happen to my periods if I take the POP?

If you are fully breastfeeding and taking the POP it is likely you will have no periods at all. Once you decrease the number of breastfeeds your periods may return as a regular cycle. In some women (30-40%) their periods return but are irregular, so they happen in some months and not others or occur at different times of the month.

When can I fall pregnant again?

If you are no longer fully breastfeeding and stop taking the POP you can fall pregnant immediately.

Who cannot take the POP?

- If you have, or have had, breast cancer
- If you have liver disease
- If you have active hepatitis caused by a virus

Some medicines make the POP less effective, for example some drugs taken for epilepsy. Ask your doctor if you are unsure about medicines (or herbal preparations) you take.



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Remember that the POP does not protect you against STIs (sexually transmitted infections) therefore, if you think you may be at risk of STIs you should also use condoms when you have sex.

What about side effects?

The POP has very few side effects - occasionally women report feeling bloated, or having headaches.

Please discuss problem or side effects of the POP with your GP before stopping your contraception.

The POP is a very effective and safe method of contraception for women who are breastfeeding. If you have any queries, or concerns, about your chosen method of postnatal contraception please discuss this with our staff.

Frequently asked questions

I want to take the COCP, when can I start it?

Generally we recommend the POP for the first 6 months of breastfeeding but if you cannot tolerate the POP you may commence the COCP at 6 weeks after your baby is born. However, if you do this your breastfeeding must be completely established otherwise the COCP could dry up your breast milk.

Can I use breastfeeding only as contraception?

Fully breastfeeding women have a slightly less than 2% chance of falling pregnant. However, to rely on this method, you must:

- Be less than 6 months after the birth of your baby
- Have no periods
- Must be exclusively breastfeeding (no supplemental feeds)



We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.

Send your feedback to:

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