

THE MINIPILL PATIENT INFORMATION HANDOUT

The “Mini Pill”, unlike the standard “combine oral contraceptive pill”, does not interfere with breast milk production. Hence, this is the pill that is very commonly used just after childbirth.

The mini pill only contains the hormone Progesterone. The usual combined pill has a combination of oestrogen and progesterone and it works by stopping ovulation. However, the mini pill thickens the cervical mucous and prevents sperm penetration. In other words, these pills are quite different. Indeed, the mini pill is safer than the combined pill because it does not contain oestrogen which is responsible for blood clotting etc.

The mini pill works within 3 days of commencing the medication. It must be taken at the same time each day or at least within 3 hours of this time. For example, if you are supposed to take the pill at 8am in the morning but forget until after 11am then you are not safe. You must then take the pill correctly for the next 3 days and in the meantime use condoms to prevent pregnancy. This is the “3 day/3 hour rule”. You must also take the mini pill everyday continuously with no breaks. If you are fully breastfeeding and not menstruating then the mini pill is almost as effective at preventing pregnancy as the combined pill. When you stop breastfeeding, consideration should be given to changing over to the combined pill as the combined pill will be more effective in preventing pregnancy.

All medication is associated with side effects. The commonest side effect of the mini pill is irregular bleeding. Approximately one quarter of woman on the mini pill will experience irregular bleeding. This will often improve over a number of months or be of a mild nature. However, if the bleeding is troublesome then you may wish to stop the medication. Other complications include breast tenderness, fluid retention and occasional mood changes.

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(revised May14)