

Traditional Method

The pill was designed so that women would have a 'period' every 4 weeks, to mimic the natural cycle. This is the way that the combined contraceptive pill was originally licensed to be used. If you would like to have a regular monthly bleed, take the pill in this way.

Take one pill a day for 21 days.

Start on the 1st or 2nd day of your period or as instructed by your doctor/nurse.



Have a 7 day pill free interval or 'break' when you have finished the packet.

During these 7 days you will usually have a bleed. It may be shorter and lighter than your natural period.



On the 8th day, start the next packet of pills (even if you are still bleeding).

You will always start a new packet of pills on the same day of the week.

Contact Us

Further Information

- Family Planning Association: www.fpa.org.uk
- Contraception Choices <https://www.contraceptionchoices.org/>

Issue No.1.1	Date of issue June 2021	Review date June 2023
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June 2021-00129



West of Scotland Sexual Health Managed Clinical Network



Different ways to take the Combined Contraceptive Pill



Shortened Break

Tricycling

Flexible Method

Continuous Method

Traditional Method

Shortened Break

New guidance advises women to shorten their 'break' to 4 days. This means that if any pills are missed when restarting, there is less chance of the pill not working. Take one pill a day for 21 days, then no pills for the next 4 days.

Take one pill a day for 21 days.
Start on the 1st or 2nd day of your period or as instructed by your doctor/nurse.

Have a 4 day pill free interval or 'break' when you have finished the packet.

During these 4 days you will usually have a bleed.
It may be shorter and lighter than your natural period.

On the 5th day, start the next packet of pills,
even if you are still bleeding.

Tricycling

This means taking 3 packets of the pill, then having a 4 day break. After the 4 day break, restart the pill and repeat the cycle. During your 4 day break you will likely have a bleed. Tricycling packets reduces how many bleeds you have in a year. This can be helpful if you have troublesome symptoms when you have a 'period'.

Take one pill a day for 9 weeks.
Start on the 1st or 2nd day of your period or as instructed by your doctor/nurse.

Have a 4 day pill free interval or 'break' when you have finished 3 packets.

During these 4 days you will usually have a bleed.
It may be shorter and lighter than your natural period.

On the 5th day, start the next packet of pills,
even if you are still bleeding

Flexible Method

If you want to have less frequent bleeds, then you can take the pill packets continuously. You may still have a bleed while taking the pills.

If you bleed for 3-4 days in a row whilst taking your pills continuously and you have taken at least 21 pills, have a 4 day break. Then restart the packet.

Take one pill a day for at least 21 days or 1 packet.
Start on the 1st or 2nd day of your period or as instructed by your doctor/nurse.

When you bleed for 3-4 days, have a 4 day pill free interval or 'break'.

During these 4 days you will usually have a bleed. It may be shorter and lighter than your natural period.

On the 5th day, start the next packet of pills.

Continuous Method

If you wish to have as few bleeds as possible, then you can take the pill packets continuously. With this method, you don't have a break and continue taking a pill every day. You may still have a bleed while taking the pills.

If you are bleeding or spotting more than once every 2 weeks, you should speak to your doctor/nurse. You may need a check up for infections. You may need to take the pill differently or try another type of pill.

Take one pill a day
Start taking pills on the 1st or 2nd day of your period or as instructed by your doctor/nurse.

Continue taking the pills without having a break.