UTAH DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

Combined Birth Control Pills

Combined birth control pills have two hormones (estrogen/progestin) that prevent pregnancy by stopping the release of an egg. The pill causes the lining of the uterus to thin and the cervical mucus (liquid at the uterine opening) to thicken, which stops sperm from reaching the egg.

Effectiveness:

- Less than 1 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year if they always take the pill each day as directed
- About 9 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year if they don't always take the pill each day as directed

You must take combined birth control pills at the same time every day

You can start using the pill at any time, as long as you are not pregnant.

Pill packs have 21 **active** pills. Most pill packs also include seven inactive pills (also known as placebo or sugar pills) to help remind you to continue taking one pill every day during the fourth week and to remind you when to begin the next pack.

ADVANTAGES: Birth control pills are easy to use. They work very well if they are used the right way. Periods may be more regular, lighter and less painful. I t can help women be at lower risk for some cancers. The pill can help clear up acne.

DISADVANTAGES: Birth control pills must be taken at the same time of day to work well. Some may find it hard to remember to take the pill or to take it at the same time of day.

You may not have any side effects from combined birth control. However, many women may experience:

- Bleeding between periods may occur the first 3 months of starting the pill
- Nausea
- Increased headaches
- Sore breasts; and/or
- Mood changes - depression, irritability

You <u>should not</u> use combined birth control pills if you are pregnant or:

- Have breast cancer now
- Have ever had a heart attack, stroke, or a blood clot or clotting problems
- Have liver disease or liver tumors
- Have migraine headaches with aura
- Have high blood pressure
- Have heart disease
- Smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day and are 35 or older
- Have ever had a complex organ transplant

Side Effects and Risks