

Live Well to  
Learn Well

Web:  
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607-255-5155

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607-255-0269

Appointments:  
Monday–Saturday

Check web for hours,  
services, providers,  
and appointment  
information

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## What are minipills?

Minipills are progestin-only birth control pills (i.e. they contain no estrogen). The progestin affects the mucus around the cervix and makes it harder for sperm to enter the uterus. It also affects the transport of the egg through the fallopian tubes to prevent fertilization, and can inhibit ovulation in some people.

Minipills are more than 99% effective when taken at the same time every day. As with all hormonal-based contraceptives, minipills do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## Why use minipills?

Minipills have no estrogen, so they are an alternative method for those who experience significant side effects with regular birth control pills and/or have medical conditions that prevent them from using pills containing estrogen.

## Is the minipill right for you?

### Advantages

- helps avoid the typical side effects of birth control pills with estrogen
- safe for breast-feeding people
- safe for those with medical contraindications to estrogen

### Disadvantages

- must be taken every day at the same time
- does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- less effective when taken with some drugs (be sure to discuss any medications with a clinician)
- may cause irregular menstrual bleeding
- less forgiving of missed or late pills than are birth control pills containing estrogen

## Side effects

The most common side effect of using minipills is irregular menstrual bleeding. While many who take minipills have normal periods, others experience irregular bleeding, spotting between periods, or no period at all.

## Instructions for use

Minipills come in packs of 28, and one is taken every day. Most types of minipills have no placebo pills in the minipill packs.



*Minipills may be a good option for those who can't use birth control pills containing estrogen.*

## Starting minipills:

*There are two options for starting minipills:*

1. Take the first pill within the first 5 days of a normal period beginning. The pill will be immediately effective.
2. Or start any time. You'll need a back-up method for two days.

Continue to take one pill daily, at the same time of the day, even during your period. For optimal effectiveness, minipills should be taken at the exact same time every day.

## After the first pack:

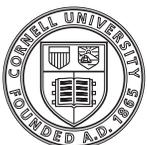
As soon as you finish one pack, begin the next one. Start your next pack even if you are still bleeding or have not started your menstrual period. Continue taking one pill every day.

Some users may ovulate every month. For others, ovulation may vary from month to month. Some may never ovulate and go months without any bleeding.

Unlike other birth control pills, there is a greater chance of unplanned pregnancy if a minipill is forgotten (not taken) or is taken late. You can improve the effectiveness of the minipill by using a backup method, like condoms.

## Warning signs

If you experience abdominal pain while taking minipills, it may be due to an ovarian cyst or an ectopic pregnancy. Don't stop taking your pills, but contact Cornell Health right away (607-255-5155).



## Late or missed minipills

**If it has been more than 3 hours** since you were supposed to take your pill, take it right away and use a back-up method of contraception for the next 48 hours.

**If you miss 1 minipill** (e.g. yesterday's minipill), take it as soon as you remember. Also take today's minipill at the regular time, even if that means taking two pills in 1 day. Use your back-up method of birth control for the next 2 days (48 hours).

**If you miss 2 or more pills in a row**, your pregnancy protection is decreased. Immediately start using your back-up method. Restart your minipills right away and take 2 pills a day for 2 days.

**If you have already had intercourse without adequate protection because you missed pills**, you may be able to use Emergency Contraception (EC) to prevent pregnancy. EC must be taken within 5 days of unprotected sex to be effective. Visit [health.cornell.edu/ec](http://health.cornell.edu/ec) to learn about prescription and non-prescription EC options.

## When to use back-up protection

- **During the first cycle of taking minipills**, you may forget pills or take them late, so a back-up method may make you feel more confident.
- **If late periods make you feel anxious**, a back-up method may help you feel more secure.
- **If you are 3 or more hours late taking a minipill**, use a back-up contraceptive for 48 hours until you are back on schedule. If you are concerned about pregnancy, consider Emergency Contraception (EC).
- **To protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**, use condoms or other barriers consistently, even while using the minipills.

## How to get a prescription

Schedule an appointment at Cornell Health by calling 607-255-5155 during business hours or logging in to myCornellHealth (accessible from [health.cornell.edu](http://health.cornell.edu)). At your appointment, the clinician will talk with you more about minipills and other contraceptive options. If you're unsure about which

contraception option is right for you, start by scheduling a Contraceptive Options appointment with a nurse.

## Picking up your pills

Your minipill prescription can be filled at Cornell Health's pharmacy or another preferred pharmacy. No appointment is needed for pick-up. Be sure to have your next pack ready several days before finishing your current pack.

## If you are already using minipills

If you are currently using minipills and want to have your prescription renewals managed at Cornell Health, please make an appointment with a clinician before you run out of pills. Consider making an appointment for a cervical cancer screening/pap smear (>21 y/o) or STI screening if needed.

The clinicians and sexual health nurses at Cornell Health can talk with you about any concerns you may have about minipills, other birth control methods, and/or reducing risks of STIs and/or testing. Request an appointment via phone (607-255-5155), online via myCornellHealth or by visiting us during business hours.

## Additional considerations

No hormonal method of birth control protects against sexually transmitted infections (STI) including HIV. Latex barriers (condoms or squares) are the best way for sexually active people to protect themselves against STIs when you or your partner have had other sex partners. Condoms, lubricants, and other sexual health products are available at the Cornell Health Pharmacy.