How does the Pill work?
The Pill works by:
• stopping the release of an egg by the ovary (ovulation)
• making the mucus (sticky fluid) at the opening of the uterus thicker so sperm can’t get through

How effective is the Pill?
The Pill is greater than 99% effective with perfect use, but with typical day-to-day use it is about 91% effective.

How do I get the Pill?
The Pill is available on prescription, which can be obtained from your doctor, SHINE SA clinics, community health clinics or youth health clinics.

How do I take the Pill?
It is usually advised to begin taking the Pill within the first 5 days of your period starting. If you start taking an active pill during this time frame then protection against pregnancy is considered immediate. The instructions that come in the packet will tell you exactly how to take it, but if you are not sure you can check with your doctor or nurse.

If you start after the first 5 days of your period you need to use another form of contraception for 7 days before you will be protected from unplanned pregnancy.

If you are taking the Pill ‘Qlaira’, then different rules apply for starting pills. You should check the information on the packet.

Take all the active pills in the packet until you reach the inactive pills. After you have finished taking the inactive pills you should start taking the active pills in your next packet. You should do this even if the withdrawal bleed hasn’t finished.

You may want to keep on using condoms with the Pill because they help to protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and provide additional contraception.

Can I skip my period?
It is possible to skip the inactive pills and take the hormone pills continuously so that you should not get a bleed. It is safe to do this although some people may experience breakthrough bleeding. Talk to your doctor or nurse to get advice about the best way to do this.

Tips for good Pill taking
• Take the Pill every day at a time that’s easy to remember.
• If you forget your pill you can take it up to 24 hours from the usual time to remain safe (up to 48 hours since your last pill), but it may cause irregular bleeding. See Missed pills for instructions.
• Keep a spare pill packet with you in case you need it.
• If you have any side effects, including irregular bleeding, continue to take the Pill. If it hasn’t settled in 2–3 months get advice from your doctor or SHINE SA.
• Do not stop taking the Pill unless you want to get pregnant or have started another form of contraception.

When is the Pill not effective?
The Pill may not be effective if:
• two or more pills are missed (i.e. more than 48 hours since the last pill was taken)
• vomiting occurs within 2 hours of taking the hormone pill
• you have very severe diarrhoea

See Missed pills for instructions.

Always check with your doctor or contact the Sexual Healthline if you are taking other medications, as some drugs may stop the Pill from working (e.g. some anti-epileptic medication). This can also include herbal medicines like St John’s Wort. If you are taking one of these medications you will need to use other protection while taking the medication and for one month after stopping.
FACT SHEET / THE PILL

The Pill does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or blood-borne viruses (BBVs). Practise safer sex. Condoms reduce the risk of STIs and BBVs.

Who should not take the Pill?
The Pill is safe for most people. In particular, the risks of taking the Pill are less than the risks of being pregnant.

The Pill is not suitable for someone who:
• has had a stroke, heart attack, blood clot or high blood pressure
• has certain types of migraine, diabetes or liver disease
• is over 35 years and smokes
• is extremely overweight

Missed pills

IS THE PILL ≥ 24 HOURS LATE?
(i.e. is it ≥ 48 hours since the last pill was taken?)

YES
Take the pill most recently missed straight away. This may mean 2 pills in one day. Any other missed pills can be discarded. Use condoms for 7 days.

NO
Take the pill straight away. This may mean 2 pills in one day. The pill will continue to work. If you have any of these side effects continue taking the pills. They will mostly settle after 2–3 months of taking the Pill. If they persist or are very annoying, see your doctor or SHINE SA clinic as a change of the type of Pill may help.

In some people the oestrogen in the Pill can cause patchy brown discolouration to appear on the face, especially if you spend a lot of time in the sun. If this happens when you are on the Pill you can try to limit your sun exposure and use sunscreen. The brown discolouration can take months to fade, even if you stop taking the Pill.

CONTACT
SHINE SA

Clinic & Counselling Appointments and General Enquiries
Tel 1300 794 584
Clinic locations and times are available at www.shinesa.org.au

Sexual Healthline
Tel 1300 883 793  Country callers (toll free) 1800 188 171
Talk to a sexual health nurse about any sexual health issue.
Available 9am – 12.30pm, Monday – Friday

National Relay Service
www.relayservice.gov.au
133 677 (TTY/Voice) 1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen) 0423 677 767 (SMS Relay)

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