

PROGESTOGEN-ONLY PILL (POP OR "MINI-PILL")

What is the progestogen-only pill?

Progestogen-only pills (POPs) are a form of oral contraception that is used to prevent pregnancy. POPs contain a hormone called progestogen, which is similar to the hormone progesterone produced by the ovaries.

There are two types of POP available in Australia:

1. The first type of pill is known by the brand names Microlut or Noriday - it contains progestogen hormones called 'levonorgestrel' or 'norethisterone'; it is sometimes also called the 'mini-pill'
2. The second type of pill is known by the brand name Slinda - it contains the progestogen hormone called 'drospirenone'

This factsheet is for the first type of POP called Microlut or Noriday, also known as the mini-pill. It does not have information about the second type of pill called Slinda. You can find information on those pills [here](#).

How does it work?

These types of pills come in a pack with 28 pills. Every pill is an active hormone pill, and you don't take a break between packs.

Unlike the combined oral contraceptive pill, there are no hormone-free days, so there are no sugar pills. This form of contraception does not contain estrogen. These pills mainly work by making the cervical mucus at the neck of the womb thicker so that sperm cannot get through.

How effective is it?

When taken correctly, POPs are as effective as the combined oral contraceptive pill at preventing pregnancy. This means they are greater than 99% effective with perfect use, but in typical day-to-day use they can be about 93% effective.

These POPs need to be taken within the same three-hour timeframe each day. If you are more than three hours late to take your pill, you may not be protected from unintended pregnancy.

If you think it may be difficult for you to take a pill at the same time every day, talk with your clinician about other options.

POPs may not be effective if vomiting occurs within three hours of taking the hormone pill or if you have severe diarrhoea. Some medicines may also stop these pills from working including some anti-epileptic medication and herbal remedies.

Always consult your doctor or contact the Family Planning Australia Talkline if you have questions about drug interactions with your POP.

Who can take it?

Most people can use POPs. You may not be able to use the POP if you:

- have breast cancer
- have severe liver disease
- have unusual bleeding from your vagina
- use medicines or herbal remedies which make the POP less effective

Advantages and disadvantages of the progestogen-only pill

Advantages

POPs provide effective contraception if taken at the same time each day. When you stop taking it, your fertility immediately returns to its normal level. POPs can be safely used by people who cannot take estrogen, and they do not carry the same risk of blood clots as the combined hormonal contraceptive pill.

Disadvantages

Periods can often change when using progestogen-only contraception. With these POPs, you may experience regular vaginal bleeding or spotting or irregular bleeding. Some people experience no vaginal bleeding at all.

Some side effects may include headaches, breast tenderness and nausea. If you experience these, they will usually decrease or stop after the first few months of taking a POP. Talk to your doctor if you develop any unwanted side effects. It may be helpful to change the type of POP or the type of contraceptive you are using.

If you are at risk of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) you can use condoms at the same time as taking the POP. As with other hormonal contraceptives, there may be a small increase in breast cancer risk.



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How do I take it?

These pills should be taken at the same time each day. Choose a time when you are most likely to remember to take the pill daily. You can fall pregnant if you take your pill more than 3 hours late. It can be helpful to set a reminder on your phone or put your pill pack next to your toothbrush.

POPs are immediately effective if started during the first five days of your menstrual cycle, which start with the first day of bleeding. If you start at any other time during your menstrual cycle, these pills will start to work after you taken the first 3 pills correctly. Other contraceptive measures such as condoms should be used during these days, while you are waiting for the POP to start working.

If you are changing from another method of contraception, or taking the POP after having a baby, miscarriage or abortion, discuss the best time for starting the POP with your doctor or nurse. Depending on when you start the pill, they may also recommend a pregnancy test to exclude pre-existing pregnancy.

What if I forget to take it?

If you are more than 3 hours late taking the mini-pill (also known as Microlut or Noriday), it will not be effective at preventing pregnancy. If this happens, you should:

- take one pill as soon as possible and take the next pill at the usual time
- continue taking your pills as usual (it will start to work again after you have taken 3 pills correctly)
- use condoms or don't have sex until you have taken 3 pills correctly

If you had sex while you weren't protected and did not use any other contraception, you may be at risk of pregnancy.

You should consider using the emergency contraceptive pill, available from a pharmacy without a prescription.

There are two types of emergency contraceptive pill. Talk to the pharmacist or doctor about which type is best for you.

Where can I get it?

All types of POPs are available on prescription, which can be obtained from your doctor, Family Planning Australia clinics, community health clinics or youth health clinics.

You can then collect the pills at your local pharmacy.

For more information

- Visit your nearest Family Planning Australia clinic fpnsw.org.au/clinics
- Chat to a nurse via Talkline – 1300 658 886 or fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- [National Relay Service \(for people who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have speech communication difficulties\)](https://fpnsw.org.au/national-relay-service) – 133 677
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) – 131 450
- Family Planning NSW client resource on contraception – [What suits me? fpnsw.org.au/health-information/contraception/contraception-options](https://fpnsw.org.au/health-information/contraception/contraception-options)