factsheet

COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILL TROUBLESHOOTING

family planning australia
Reproductive & Sexual Health

If you forget a combined oral contraceptive pill, follow these guidelines. Different instructions apply if you are taking Qlaira. Check the information in the packet.

What do I do if I miss taking a pill?

If you forget a pill follow these rules. This applies to combined oral contraceptive pills and the drospirenone progestogen-only pills (Slinda).
If you are taking a different progestogen-only pill, please see the progestogen-only pill fact sheets. Ask your doctor or nurse if you are unsure what pill type you are using.

Please note: there are different instructions for missed pills if you are taking the pill Qlaira – check the information in the packet.

Less than 24 hours late – this is considered a "late pill" (not more than 48 hours since you took your last pill):

- take the late pill as soon as you remember
- then take the next pill at the usual time – you may end up taking two pills on the same day
- you will still be protected against pregnancy

More than 24 hours late – this is considered a "missed pill" (more than 48 hours since you took your last pill):

- take the missed pill as soon as you remember
- take the next pill at the usual time - you may end up taking two pills on the same day
- throw away any other missed pills
- continue taking pills as usual. You will not be protected against pregnancy again until you have 7 hormone (active) pills. Therefore, if you have less than 7 days until the sugar pills, skip the sugar pills and continue straight onto the next packet of hormone (active) pills
- use another form of contraception (such as condoms) or don't have sex until you have taken 7 pills correctly (that is, for the next 7 days)
- you may need to use emergency contraception if you've had unprotected sex

Do I need to take the emergency contraceptive pill?

Consider using the emergency contraceptive pill if you:

- miss more than one pill in the first 7 days of a new pack of pills and have had unprotected sex in the previous 5 days
- start a new pack more than 24 hours late and have had unprotected sex in the previous 5 days
- have unprotected sex in the 7 days after missing more than one pill
- miss a pill and have missed other hormone pills in the last 7 days

The emergency contraceptive pill is available from pharmacies without a prescription – it is important to take it as soon as possible. There are two types of emergency contraceptive pill. Talk to the pharmacist or doctor about which type is best for you.

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) – 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

The information in this Factsheet has been provided for educational purposes only and Family Planning Australia has taken care to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date at the time of publication. If you have personal concerns about your reproductive/sexual health, please see a health care provider or visit a Family Planning clinic. September 2025