

# PROGESTOGEN-ONLY PILL

## FACT SHEET

### What is the Progestogen-Only Pill?

The progestogen-only pill (POP), commonly called the mini-pill is a form of oral contraception that is used to prevent pregnancy.

The POP contains a very low dose of a hormone called progestogen, which is similar to the natural hormone progesterone produced by the ovaries. The POP comes in a 28 day packet with all of the pills in the packet containing the hormone (active pills).



### How does it work?

The progestogen-only pill works by:

- making the mucus (sticky fluid) at the opening of the uterus thicker so sperm can't get through
- sometimes stopping the release of an egg by the ovary (ovulation), this can vary by person and by cycle

### How effective is it?

Although it is sometimes called the mini-pill, the POP is as effective as the combined oral contraceptive pill.

This means it 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 POP?

The POP 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 POP?

- The POP is taken every day.
- Every pill is an active pill, and there are no non-hormone (inactive) pills to take as there is with the combined pill.
- It's important to take the progestogen-only pill at the same time every day for maximum effectiveness. Choose a time when you are most likely to remember taking it, and keep to it. If you are more than 3 hours late (27 hours since your last dose) you will not be protected against pregnancy.

### Can I skip my period?

It is not possible to reliably skip your period with the POP.

Periods will often change, on POP:

- approximately 2 in 10 people have no vaginal bleeding
- approximately 4 in 10 people have regular vaginal bleeding
- approximately 4 in 10 people have irregular vaginal bleeding

### Tips for good pill taking

- Take the POP every day, at a time that's easy to remember.
- If you have any side effects, including irregular bleeding, continue to take the POP. If it hasn't settled in 2-3 months get advice from your doctor or SHINE SA.
- Do not stop taking the POP unless you want to get pregnant or have started another form of contraception.
- You could use your mobile alarm or a contraception app as a daily reminder.

### When is the POP effective?

The POP is immediately effective if started during the first 5 days of your menstrual cycle, which starts with the first day of bleeding.

If the POP is started at any other time in the menstrual cycle it is effective after 2 days (3 consecutive daily pills taken). Other contraceptive measures such as condoms should be used for these 2 days.

If changing from the Pill or another method of contraception, or after having a baby, discuss the best time for starting with your doctor.

## When is the POP not effective?

The POP may not be effective if:

- the pill is missed (i.e. more than 27 hours since the last pill was taken or 3 hours late)
- 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 POP 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

## What's are the benefits of the Progestogen-Only Pill?

- It is an effective form of contraception if taken at the same time every day.
- Can be safely used after giving birth and during breastfeeding.
- Is less likely to cause hormonal side effects than other contraceptive methods with a higher dose of hormone.
- Can be used by people who cannot take oestrogen, which is the other hormone found in the combined Pill.
- Once you stop taking the POP, your fertility returns to your normal level immediately.

## What are the possible side effects?

It is possible that there will be changes to your periods, such as spotting or irregular periods. Sometimes periods may stop altogether.

If you have breakthrough bleeding (vaginal bleeding at times other than your period) while taking the progestogen-only pill, don't stop, continue the packet as usual. This is common, but consult a doctor if it persists or troubles you.

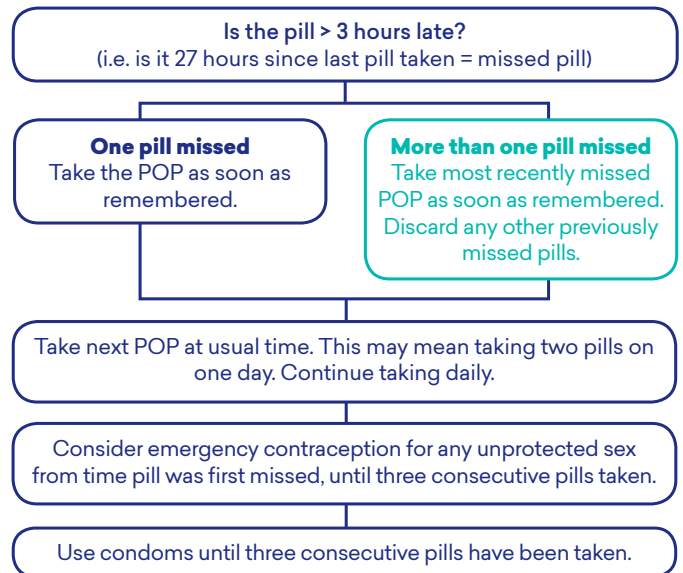
Other side effects can include headaches, breast tenderness and nausea. These will often decrease or stop after the first few months.

## Who should not take the POP?

The POP may not be suitable for someone who:

- has, or have had, breast cancer
- has severe liver disease
- is taking other medications such as some antiepileptic drugs, which reduce the effectiveness of the POP

## Missed Pills



If you are worried about having missed a pill, contact a pharmacist, doctor or SHINE SA clinic. If you are thinking about using Emergency Contraception, it's best taken as soon as possible, but can be taken up to 5 days after unprotected sex. If you take the Emergency Contraceptive Pill 'EllaOne', you should not restart the POP for 5 days after taking it.

**The progestogen-only 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.**

CONTACT  
SHINE SA

**SHINE**SA

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### Clinic & Counselling Appointments and General Enquiries

Tel 1300 794 584

Clinic locations and times are available at [www.shinesa.org.au](http://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](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

133 677 (TTY/Voice) 1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen) 0423 677 767 (SMS Relay)