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▶ **What is the progestin-only pill?**

This is a birth control pill containing only 1 hormone (progestin) with no estrogen.

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▶ **How is the progestin-only pill taken?**

Pills are taken at the same time every day (with no days off).

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▶ **How does the progestin-only pill work?**

It works by thickening the cervical mucus, decreasing the release of an egg and changing the lining of the uterus.

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▶ **How effective is the progestin-only pill?**

With perfect use this pill is 92-99% effective in preventing pregnancy.

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▶ **What are the advantages of using the Progestin-only pill (POP)?**

- Safer for women who cannot take estrogen (e.g. migraine headaches with aura, breastfeeding, smokers > 35).
- Lighter periods with less cramping, less PMS and breast tenderness.

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▶ **What are the possible side-effects or risks?**

- Irregular bleeding (or no period)
- Headache
- Changes in mood
- Acne
- Increased hair growth
- Ovarian cysts

If a pregnancy does occur, it is more likely to be an ectopic (tubal) pregnancy

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▶ **Who should NOT use this type of birth control?**

- Anyone who is pregnant
- Anyone with known or suspected breast cancer
- Anyone with active liver disease or history of liver tumour (benign or malignant)

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▶ **CAUTION: Seek medical attention AT ONCE, if you notice ANY of the following:**

- Severe pain in your legs or abdomen
- Severe chest pain, cough and/or shortness of breath
- Blurring or loss of vision, speech problems
- Depression
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin)

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▶ **Are there times when the POP may not be effective?**

Yes, you should use condoms for additional protection:

- When waiting to start the pill
- For the first 7 days after starting the pill
- If you vomit within one hour of taking the pill or have diarrhea for two or more days
- If you are taking certain medications  
*If you have unprotected sex during a time when the pill might not be effective, contact the Sexual Health clinic, your health care provider or Pharmacist about the need for emergency contraception*

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▶ **What medications might interact with the POP?**

- Benzodiazepines : anti-anxiety medications such as lorazepam

(Ativan), diazepam (Valium) or alprazolam

- Barbiturates: amobarbitol (Amytal), phenobarbital (Nembutal), primidone, secobarbital (Seconol)
- Medications used to treat HIV (antiretrovirals), tuberculosis (rifampin), pulmonary artery hypertension (bosentin)
- Anti convulsants : Dilantin, ethosuximide
- Carbamazepine (for seizures or nerve pain)
- Sedatives (Chloral hydrate, glutethimid)
- St John's wort (herbal medication for depression)

***If you are taking any of these medications, speak with the Sexual Health Clinic, your pharmacist or health care provider.***

Depending on your specific circumstances you may need to

- Stop taking one of the medications
- Change one of the medications to another
- Change how you are taking one or both medications
- Use condoms during treatment and for 7 days after you finish treatment

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*Who can you talk to if you have more questions?*

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe  
muskoka**  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520  
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520  
[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

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 **Resources:**

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

[Miconor product information](#)

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# Progestin-Only Pill

