

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

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What are some of the benefits and side-effects of the birth control pill?

Since it was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1960, “the pill” remains one of the safest and most effective forms of birth control available. In fact, oral contraceptives (OCs) may very well be the most studied medication ever produced, leaving no doubt that they offer overwhelmingly more health benefits than risks.

Today, there are more than 100 brands of OCs available, all of which contain estrogen, progestin or some combination of the two. In general, the pill is considered very safe for most in good health, but like any drug, it does have side effects and associated risks.

Consider the following benefits and risks of OCs with your health care provider before deciding if they are a good option for you.

Benefits:

- 91-99% effective in preventing pregnancy
- Decreases menstrual bleeding and cramping
- Lessens premenstrual symptoms
- Makes periods more regular
- May prevent ovarian and uterine cancer

- Improves bone density
- Lowers the risk of ovarian cysts
- May improve acne

Risks:

- No protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV
- Small risk of heart attack and stroke, which increases among smokers
- Can cause blood clots in rare cases
- Can worsen severe diabetes
- Taking other medications can reduce the effectiveness of the pill

A wide range of contraceptives are available at the UA Campus Health Service, including the pill. To make an appointment with a health care provider, call (520) 621-9202 or simply stop by the Highland Commons Building between the 6th St. Garage and Highland Ave.

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SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, David Salafsky, MPH, and Carrie Hardesty, MEd, CHES, health educators at the UA Campus Health Service.