

# Facts & DETAILS

## Family Planning/Birth Control Methods and Information

### The Pill: Things you should know

The pill contains estrogen and progestogens. They work by preventing the release of the egg from the ovary. When used correctly and taken every day at about the same time, the pill is 99 percent effective at preventing pregnancy.

The pill **does not protect** against STIs, including HIV/AIDS. When starting the pill, or if you forget to take them, a backup method such as condoms should be used to prevent pregnancy for two weeks.

Side effects of the pill may include nausea, headache, breast tenderness, and/or spotting between your periods. Your periods may also become lighter and shorter, and you may even miss one. **If you do not have a period for two months, return to the clinic.** Most side effects will usually go away within two to three months.

Symptoms of a blood clot are rare, however, you should go to the nearest emergency room if you have any of the following symptoms: severe leg and/or chest pain, severe headaches, visual disturbances, difficulty breathing, coughing up blood, slurring of speech, and/or weakness or numbness of legs or arms.

Some medications may interfere with the pill. If you are prescribed a new medication, ask your provider whether a backup method should be used. Use a backup method when taking antibiotics. If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember. Do not take more than one pill within six hours. If you forget two or more pills, you will not be protected from pregnancy and should use a backup method. See package insert for further instructions.

### The Pill: When to start it

1. Use a backup method until starting the pill and for two weeks after.
2. Start the pill pack on the Sunday after you start your period. If you start your period on Sunday, start the pills that day.
3. Take the pill at the same time every day. This helps you remember to take it and also increases effectiveness.

### How and when do I pick up my pills?

Call when you start your last pack of pills to schedule a pill pick up. **Birth control pills will not be given to you if you are over age 35 and smoke, or if you have any other medical condition as determined by the provider to put you at an increased risk.**

### What are Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs)/The Morning After pill/Plan B?

ECPs are pills with hormones similar to other oral contraception pills. They prevent pregnancy by stopping the ovaries from releasing an egg or stopping sperm from joining with an egg. This reduces the chance of pregnancy by about 85 percent when used within 72 hours. **ECPs are not abortion pills: they will not work if you are already pregnant. ECPs do not protect from STIs including HIV/AIDS.**

Side effects of an ECP are similar to regular birth control pills and include: nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fatigue, and headache.



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Sedgwick County Strategic Communications Office

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### When should an ECP/Plan B be used?

ECPs can be helpful in the unfortunate incidence of rape or when a birth control method fails (i.e. forget to take a pill, condom breaks, or you miss your Depo shot). ECPs can also be used after unprotected, unplanned consensual sex, although emergency contraceptives should not be used as a regular form of birth control.

### How soon must the Morning After Pill be taken to be effective?

An ECP must be taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex; the sooner the better. See package insert for instructions.

### Where can I get an ECP?

ECPs are available at pharmacies without a prescription for individuals 18 years or older. Ask your provider for a prescription if you are under 18 years old.

### Depo Provera: Things you should know

1. Depo contains only progesterone hormones.
2. It prevents pregnancy by preventing the release of the egg from the ovary.
3. When injected as scheduled, Depo is 99.7 percent effective at preventing pregnancy.
4. Depo **does not protect** against STDs, including HIV/AIDS.
5. You are protected from pregnancy immediately, if your shot is given within five days of starting your period. If your periods are irregular, your provider will determine when Depo can be started.

Your protection lasts 12-13 weeks before you need another one.

6. The effects of Depo are reversible, it will not prevent you from getting pregnant in the future.

7. Side effects of Depo include spotting, headache, nervousness, stomach cramps, dizziness, fatigue, decreased sex drive, and the potential for weight gain. Weight gain can be decreased with proper diet and exercise. Periods may become lighter, and some women will stop having periods.

8. Women on Depo for a long period of time are at an increased risk of decreased bone density. This can be prevented by consuming enough calcium, either through your diet or in a calcium supplement.

9. Symptoms of a blood clot are rare, however, you should go to the nearest emergency room if you have any of the following symptoms severe leg and/or chest pain, severe headaches, visual disturbances, difficulty breathing, coughing up blood, slurring of speech, and/or weakness or numbness of legs or arms.

10. Be sure and keep your scheduled appointments for Depo injections. Missing an appointment will put you at an increased risk of pregnancy.

### Other birth control methods:

The Sedgwick County Health Department offers IUDs, Implanon, and Nuvaring. Prescriptions can be written for the Patch.



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### Routine health screenings

**Breast self-examinations** should be done monthly, after your period is finished. Ask your provider for instructions or see Komen's Breast Exam shower card for more information.

**Yearly well-woman exams** should be scheduled for all women over age 18 or who are sexually active. At your annual exam, you should also discuss routine immunizations with your primary care provider.

If you are **40 or older** you should have an annual **mammogram**. If you are **50 or older**, you should also have annual screenings for: colon cancer, cholesterol, glucose, and bone density (every two years).

### Severe Reactions

The birth control pill and Depo are medications. Some individuals may have a reaction. If you experience **shortness of breath, severe crushing chest pain, swelling of the head and neck, or fainting**, seek immediate medical care at the nearest emergency room.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call the Sedgwick County Health Department at (316) 660-7300 or visit [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org).



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