

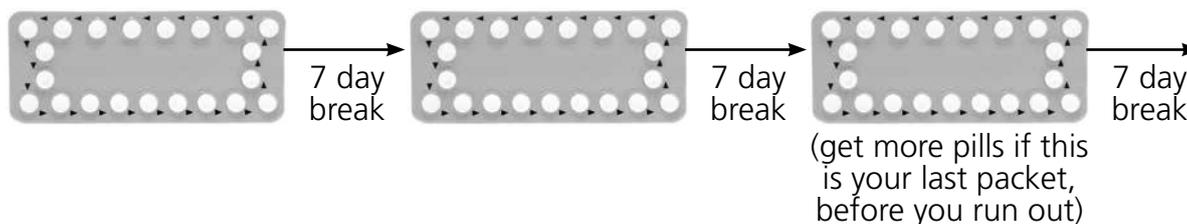
Different ways to take the combined pill

Traditional method

The pill was designed so that women would still have a 'period' every 4 weeks, to mimic the natural cycle. This is the way that the combined pill was originally licenced to be used. If you would like to have a regular monthly bleed, take the pill in this way.

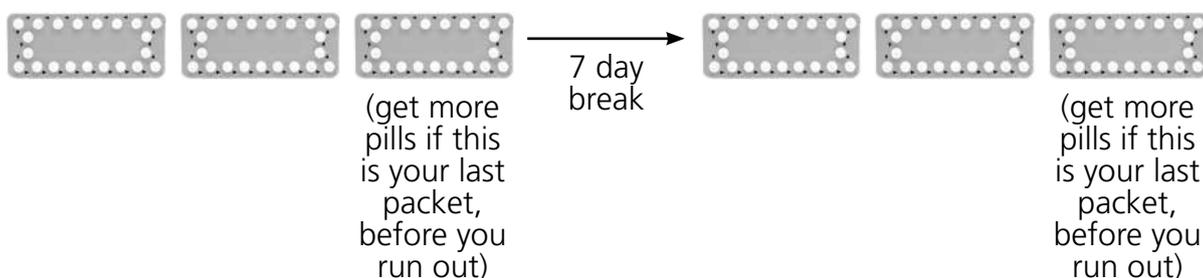
- Take 21 pills (starting on the first or second day of your period, or as instructed by your doctor/nurse). This is the amount of pills in 1 packet.
- When you have finished the packet, have a 7 day pill free interval or 'break'. During these 7 days you will usually have a bleed. It is likely to be shorter and lighter than your natural period.
- **On the 8th day** start the next packet (even if you are still bleeding).

This means you will **always** start your new packet of pills on the same day of the week.



Tricycling

This means taking 3 packets of the pill without a break, then having a 7 day break, and then taking a further 3 packets of the pill without a break, etc. Instead of having 13 bleeds each year, you will only have 5. This can be helpful if you usually have troublesome symptoms when you have a 'period'.



Tailored/Continuous pill taking

If you wish to have as few bleeds as possible then you can take pill packets back to back continuously. You may still have a bleed while taking the pills.

If you bleed for 2 days in a row whilst taking your pills continuously then **stop taking your pills for 4 days**. Pop these 4 pills out of the packet and throw them away, so you stay on the correct day of the week. During these 4 days you will continue to bleed. On the fifth day start taking your pills again. Continue taking the packets back to back. If you start bleeding again for 2 days in a row, stop the pill again for 4 days. **Make sure you take the pill for at least 14 days between these 4 day breaks**. You will need to remember to get more pills before your last packet runs out.



If you bleed for 2 days
in a row miss the next
4 pills then restart

Some women always start bleeding after a certain length of time (for example, during the 4th strip of pills). If this happens regularly, you can take a planned 4 day break before the time you are likely to start bleeding. If you have a holiday or party coming up and you are worried you might start bleeding during this time, you can deliberately take a 4 day break the week before to get the bleed over with.

If you are getting bleeding or spotting more than once every 2 weeks, you should speak with to the doctor/nurse who prescribed your pills. You may need a check-up for infections, or might need to try a different pill.

How safe is tricycling and tailored/continuous pill taking?

Tailored/continuous pill taking and tricycling are examples of `off licence` prescribing, as the pills are being used in a different way from how they were licensed to be used. There is no evidence that taking the pill in any of these ways is harmful.

How to contact us

Oxfordshire Sexual Health Service

Tel: 01865 231 231

Website: www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk/

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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