

View this article online at: patient.info/medicine/progestogen-only-contraceptive-tablets

Progestogen-only contraceptive tablets

Carefully read and follow the printed information leaflet from inside your pack. The leaflet will give you more information about your brand of pill.



Take one tablet every day, at the same time of day.

If you forget to take a tablet on time, take it as soon as you remember. If you are more than three hours late and you are taking Micronor®, Norgeston®, or Noriday®, you must also use a condom for the following two days. If you are taking a pill containing desogestrel (eg, Cerazette®, Cerelle® or Zelleta®) and you are more than 12 hours late, you must also use a condom for the following two days.

About progestogen-only contraceptive tablets

Type of medicine	Progestogen-only contraceptive
Used for	Contraception (preventing pregnancy)
Also called	Aizea® (containing desogestrel); Cerelle® (containing desogestrel); Cerazette® (containing desogestrel); Feanolla® (containing desogestrel); Micronor® (containing norethisterone); Norgeston® (containing levonorgestrel); Nacrez® (containing desogestrel); Noriday® (containing norethisterone); Zelleta® (containing desogestrel)
Available as	Tablets

Progestogen-only contraceptive tablets are also known as the 'progestogen-only pill' (POP), or the 'mini-pill'. The POP is commonly used when the combined oral contraceptive (COC) pill, which also contains oestrogen, is not suitable. It can be safely taken if you are breast-feeding.

POP tablets contain a **progestogen** (which is a female sex hormone) similar to the progesterone hormone made naturally by your ovaries. Progestogens used in POPs include desogestrel, levonorgestrel and norethisterone.

POPs work mainly by thickening the mucus made by the neck of the womb (cervix). This makes it very difficult for sperm to travel through the cervix and into the womb in order to fertilise an egg. They also affect the lining of the womb so that it does not become thick enough for an egg to attach to and grow. Progestogens also have some effect on the ovaries, and ovulation (the release of an egg each month) may not occur as often.

Before taking progestogen-only contraceptive tablets

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons before you start taking the mini-pill, it is important that your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you think you might be pregnant.
- If you have any problems with the way your liver works.
- If you have a problem with your arteries, called arterial disease.
- If you have systemic lupus erythematosus (an inflammatory condition, often called SLE).

- If you have had breast cancer or a cancer that you have been told is dependent on a sex hormone.
- If you have an ovarian cyst, or any vaginal bleeding other than your normal monthly period.
- If you have a rare inherited blood disorder called porphyria.
- If you have a condition that interferes with the absorption of food (such as coeliac disease, cystic fibrosis or pancreatitis).
- If you have ever had an ectopic pregnancy or if you have developed yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes (jaundice) during a pregnancy.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are taking any other medicines, including those available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines. This is because some medicines interfere with the way contraceptives work. In particular, medicines for epilepsy and medicines for treating fungal infections, as well as the herbal preparation St John's wort, can reduce the effectiveness of the mini-pill.

How to take progestogen-only contraceptive tablets

- Before you start taking the tablets, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside your pack. The leaflet will give you more information about the brand of pill you have been given, and also a full list of side-effects which you may experience from taking it.
- Take one tablet each day, starting on day one of your cycle (the first day of your period). If you have just had a baby, you may be asked to start taking it straightaway.
- POP tablets are taken every day, including when you are having a period. When you finish one pack, start another pack the next day. You can choose a time of day to take your tablets that suits you, but you should take them at the same time, each day. It is important not to be late taking your doses, or to miss any.
- If you do forget to take it on time, take it as soon as you remember, and then take the next dose at your usual time. If you are taking Micronor®, Norgeston®, or Noriday® and you are more than **three hours late** in taking a tablet, you are not protected against pregnancy. In this case, continue to take your tablets each day as normal, but you must also use an additional method, such as a condom, for the following two days. If you are taking a pill containing desogestrel (for example Cerazette®, Cerelle® or Zelleta®) and you are more than **twelve hours late** in taking a tablet, you are not protected against pregnancy. In this case, continue to take your tablets each day as normal, but you must also use an additional method, such as a condom, for the next two days.

Getting the most from your treatment

- To help decide whether this contraceptive tablet is suitable for you, your doctor will assess your general health. Make sure you attend your regular appointments with the doctor or nurse. This is especially important if you have an existing medical condition, as your health may need to be more closely monitored.
- **Important:** if you are sick (vomiting) or have diarrhoea, it can reduce the effectiveness of the mini-pill. If you are sick within two hours of taking a tablet, take another straightaway. If the sickness continues or if you have severe diarrhoea, you must use additional contraceptive precautions such as a condom while you are ill and for two days after you recover.
- If at any time you suspect that you may be pregnant, stop taking the tablets and make an appointment to see your doctor as soon as possible.
- Some medicines can reduce the effectiveness of this pill. These include medicines for epilepsy, medicines to treat fungal infections, the herbal preparation St John's wort, and medicines used to treat tuberculosis (TB). Make sure your doctor knows about any other medicines you are taking, and if you buy any medicines 'over the counter', always ask your pharmacist for advice.

Can progestogen-only contraceptive tablets cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, all medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below lists some of the most common ones associated with POP tablets. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve over the first few days of taking a new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following side-effects continue or become troublesome.

Common mini-pill side-effects - these affect less than 1 in 10 people who take this medicine	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling sick (nausea)	Eat simple or bland meals - avoid rich and spicy food. If you are sick (vomiting) within two hours of taking a pill, take another tablet as soon as possible (see also the information above on vomiting)
Headache	Drink plenty of water and ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headache continues, speak with your doctor
Irregular periods, mood swings, reduced sex drive, increase in acne, increase in weight, and breast discomfort	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your doctor

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

How to store progestogen-only contraceptive tablets

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

If you are having an operation or any dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Further reading & references

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Desogestrel 75 microgram Film-coated Tablets](#); Actavis UK Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated June 2015.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Norgeston®](#); Bayer plc, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated July 2016
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Noriday® Tablets](#); Pfizer Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated July 2016
- British National Formulary, 72nd Edition (Sep 2016) British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London

Disclaimer: This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. EMIS has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Original Author: Mr Michael Stewart	Current Version: Mr Michael Stewart	Peer Reviewer: Prof Cathy Jackson
Document ID: 3466 (v25)	Last Checked: 19/12/2016	Next Review: 19/12/2019

View this article online at: patient.info/medicine/progestogen-only-contraceptive-tablets

Discuss Progestogen-only contraceptive tablets and find more trusted resources at Patient.

Ask your doctor about Patient Access

- 🔍 Book appointments
- 🔍 Order repeat prescriptions
- 🔍 View your medical record
- 🔍 Create a personal health record (iOS only)



Simple, quick and convenient.
Visit patient.info/patient-access
or search 'Patient Access'

Like us.
it's good for you!



Like us on **facebook**
fb.com/patient