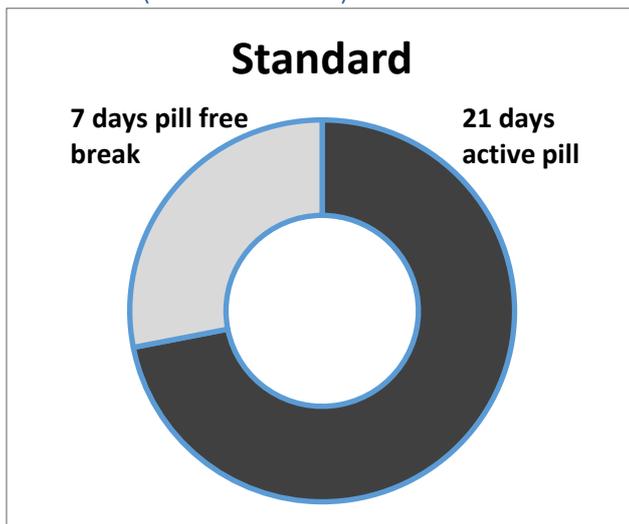


Different ways to take the combined contraceptive pill

When to start your pill

If this is the first time you have taken the pill, start on the first or second day of your period, or as instructed by your doctor/nurse. If you don't start your pill on the first or second day, it will take 7 days to work so you will need to use additional precautions (condoms) or avoid sex for the first seven days.

Standard (or Traditional)



as this puts you at risk of pregnancy.

The combined pill was originally designed so that women would have a bleed every four weeks. You don't have periods when you take the pill – you have a “withdrawal bleed”. This is caused by not taking hormones in the pill-free week. If you prefer to have a regular monthly bleed, take the pill this way.

- Take one pill every day for 21 days (this is the amount of pills in one strip).
- When you have finished the strip, have a 7 day pill free 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 strip (even if you are still bleeding). This means you will always start your new strip of pills on the same day of the week.
- It is important not to miss pills at the start and end of a break

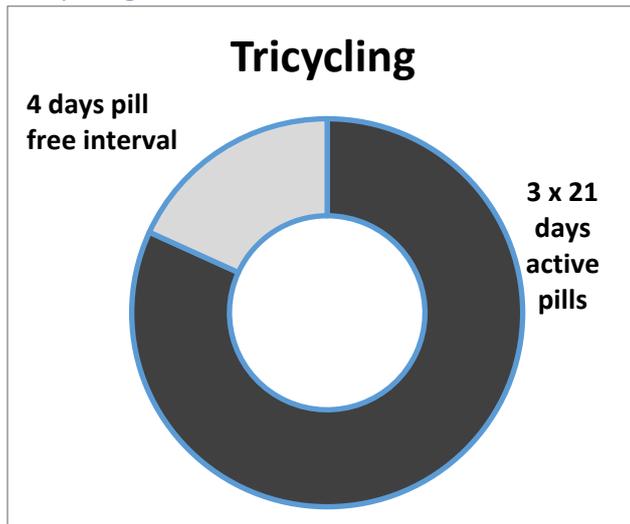
Shortened pill free break



Shortening the pill free break could help if you get heavy or painful bleeding, headaches, or mood swings on pill-free days. Taking a shorter break or missing the break might also make it less risky that you'll get pregnant if you forget to take a pill at another time

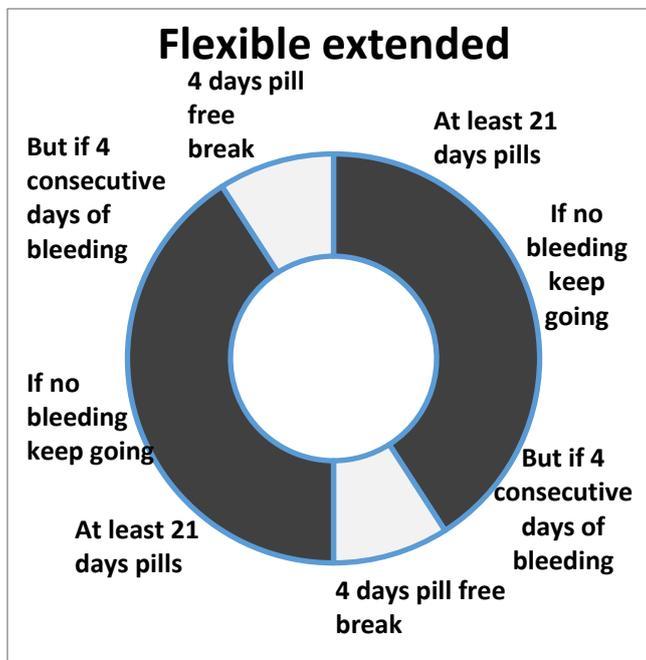
- Take one pill every day for 21 pills (this is the amount of pills in one strip).
- When you have finished the strip, have a 4 day pill free break. During these four days you will usually have a bleed. It is likely to be shorter and lighter than your natural period.
- On the **5th day** start the next strip (even if you are still bleeding).

Tricycling



This means taking three strips of the pill in a row without a break, then having a 4 day break, followed by a further three strips of the pill continuously without a break. By taking the pill in this way, it will reduce the number of bleeds in a year. This can be helpful if you have troublesome symptoms associated with your pill free break.

Flexible extended



If you want to have as few bleeds as possible then you can take pill strips continuously without having a break.

1. If you start to have spotting for four days in a row you may stop taking them for four days to have a bleed, as long as you have taken at least 21 pills continuously before this break.
2. On the fifth day start taking your pills again, one every day as before, even if you continue to bleed, this bleeding should then settle.
3. If you start bleeding again for more than four days in a row, you may stop for a four day break again, as long as you have taken your pill for 21 days continuously, as in point 1.
4. There must always be at least 21 days of continuous pill taking between these four day breaks.

It is common for some women to start bleeding after a certain length of time (for example, after 2 strips of pills). If this happens regularly, you can take a planned four day break before the time you are likely to start bleeding.

If you are getting bleeding or spotting more than once every

two weeks, you should speak to the doctor/nurse who prescribed your pills for further advice. You may need a check-up for infections or might need to try a different pill.

How safe is tricycling and flexible extended 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 originally licensed to be used. These ways of taking combined contraceptive pills are now recommended by the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, as they can help with period related symptoms. They are safe, and may be more effective at preventing pregnancy. They do not affect a woman's return to fertility on stopping the pill. There is no evidence that taking the pill in any of these ways is harmful.

Further information on the combined pill:

If you have any further questions, please call **0300 303 2880** to discuss further.

Further information on the combined pill: <https://tinyurl.com/bshaw-cocp>

If you have concerns about your combined pill at any time, please ring **0300 303 2880**.